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THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

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THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

BY BENEDICT WILLIAMSON WITH A FOREWORD BY THE LORD BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH

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TO

THE LOVERS OF JESUS

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FOREWORD

The peculiar elasticity of spirit manifested in modern Catholic life is due in great part to teachings such as this Book contains. They are teachings which cannot be emphasised beyond measure, and which are capable of varied forms of exposition. The Book itself we have not studied in detail, but our knowledge of the Author, and the usual safeguards in publication, make one very content it has come forth.

The experience of many years is bound to record grave changes in the general drift of Catholic piety. One approaches the private worship of God from many directions, and it is the duty of priests to steady the true perspective of our relations with Him. Side-winds with a Jansenistic chill or a false mysticism's curiosity and inertia are examples of what one means, and our days have happily recalled souls to the simplest of all ways the direct active love of God. There are certain curious historical manifestations in this connection. From the first—during the great patristic age—there was a great simplicity in the apprehension of God's service, and also in what might be called its "direction." A great love of God stands out as the grand ideal, fed by frequentation of Holy Communion and deep meditation on the Holy Scripture. For long centuries the Sacred Books were the only manuals and guides, and great armies of saints were brought up on no other nourishment. All this was set in an atmosphere of a severely penitential spirit, which in the end, as the use of the Holy Eucharist died down, seemed more prominent than the deeper essentials of Christian life. It is very obvious that a new day arose with S. Ignatius, S. Philip and S. Francis de Sales. We can still trace the amazement with which the *Vie Dévote* was received, and few read it now because perhaps it has been carried beyond itself in newer appeals by a crowding multitude of writers. The revelation made to St. Margaret Mary, the

growth of a renewed devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and to the Most Sacred Heart, as well as the tender interventions of Our Blessed Lady, have all kindled a supreme loyalty to the luminous person of Our Saviour.

This spirit has been captured and brought to book in all modern theologies. The theological schools of Rome especially have exorcised the old hesitations, doubts, and curious perversities of interpretation where the Holy Council of Trent was so clear. It is impossible to express our gratitude to the fearless Italian teachers from St. Alfonso to our own day.

In all the practicalities of a devout life, in prayer, frequentation of the Sacraments, integrity of Confession, the powers of indulgences, the nature of contrition, an intense light makes us once for all see the ways of peace and the great goodness of God. One would greatly desire the setting out in English of some of their writings. A very delightful booklet of Fr. Frassinetti—one of the most experienced priests of Italy—" The consolation of the devout soul " might well be re-issued, or it might be of service to translate from his Theology the treatise of Faith, Hope and Charity. His writings are luminous with truthful good sense. One might hope, too, that the Dominican Fathers will yet set out in a condensed manner the splendid work of Fr. Massoulie, O.P., once issued by Bishop Malon : *" Traité de l'Amour de Dieu."*

It is an unrivalled analysis of the doctrine concerning the Love of God. Certainly no book seems to approach it in perfect exposition, a subject most grievously misunderstood by many whom it fills with apprehension instead of consolation.

These may be random thoughts, but the " first law " of our life is not a random thing, and if Fr. Benedict Williamson's Book should make one see the true way to a fruitful Catholic life, his help will work according to the manifest providence of God as especially seen in our own day.

✠JOHN, BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH.

Feast of St. Lawrence, 1922.

PROLOGUE

This is a book for the lovers of Jesus, or at least for those who desire to become His lovers; to others its language will seem forced and unreal, exaggerated and extravagant.

It endeavours to tell the love-story of the human soul from the first moment of her falling in love with Jesus until love reaches its triumphant conclusion in her Marriage to Him.

In tracing the course of this supernatural Love-Life I have illustrated its operations by a comparison with the movements of natural love; supernatural love is as high above the merely natural as the Heavens are above the earth, yet there is a wonderful similarity of operation in both.

They move parallel to each other, and the experiences of one can be drawn upon as a means of understanding the other.

There is a real parallel between Nature and Grace: there is a real parallel between supernatural and natural love, hence the inspired writer of the Canticles, and all mystical theologians, notably S. John of the Cross, have not hesitated to use the operations of natural love as a means of making more clearly intelligible the movements of the supernatural.

In any theoretical explanation of mystical experience, I have followed the sure guidance of the great Spanish theologians. The plan of this book is based on that of the second part of Card. Vives' Comp. Theo. Ascetico-Mystico; although it is chiefly concerned with the experimental side of the mystic state rather than the theoretical; and is descriptive rather than definitive, yet we must, to avoid any possible misconception on the part of the reader,

set out quite clearly *the dogmatic facts on which all true mystical experience must be based.*

The end of the supernatural life for every soul that shall be saved is her participation in the very life of God through her mystical marriage with Him, to which she comes by her perfect purgation either in this world or the next. The possibility of this perfect purgation in time is implied in the decree of the Council of Florence. "Illorumque animas qui post baptisma susceptum nullam omnino peccati maculam incurrerunt, *illas etiam,* qui post contractam peccati maculam *vel in suis corporibus,* vel eisdem exutae corporibus. . . *Sunt purgatae in caelum mox recipi et intueri clare ipsum deum trinum et unum.*"

The mystical marriage of the soul with God involves such a wonderful union with Him that in its closeness it transcends all the human intellect can conceive, or human words describe; yet human words must be used in an endeavour to explain the inexpressible, even though as inadequate as the arms of a man to embrace the world.

This mystical marriage is the full consummation of the supernatural life of Grace, and is its normal term.[1] For the mystical life is only the supernatural life of Grace in its fulness, *not a different life but the same life,* nourished by the same infused gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, and indeed all the older writers speak of this life not as mystical but supernatural.

"God," says Abbot Marmion, "gives us a mysterious share in His own Nature, which we call 'Grace.' We become partakers of the *Divine Nature.* This does not mean that we become partakers of the *Divine Essence,* but of the *Divine Nature,* that is to say of that activity which constitutes the Life of God and consists in the knowledge and the fruitful beatifying love of the Divine Persons."

Again, the Church prays in the Holy Sacrifice that we may become *sharers of His Divinity* who became partaker

[1] See articles of Fr. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., January to June, 1922, in "La Vie Spirituelle."

of our humanity—*ejus Divinitatis esse consortes* qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps. . . . Very significant is the action to which the prayer is joined, for the words are said at the moment when the priest puts the little drop of water into the wine. The words and action are descriptive. The wine symbolises Christ, the little drop of water the human soul, as seemingly lost in the Divinity as the little drop of water appears to be lost in the wine. When we read sentences like the following : " Through the marriage of the soul with God, the two are not merely joined together but actually become one, that is they are no longer two but one . . they pass into each other and become each other . . . the soul is taken up into a participation in the Divinity, and so oned with God that her acts are His and His are Hers." " All the love flaming within her is the fire of her Divine Bridegroom. She has passed into Him, and she lives in Him, every other action within her ceases, and He only works within her." Or, again, " She seems as clothed with Divinity, living in God, and as if changed and transformed into Him." We may well exclaim with Nicodemus : " How can this thing be? How can the human soul become God? How can a finite creature participate in the nature of her Creator?" To answer these questions we must see wherein is the *essential* difference between *God Infinite and uncreate,* and the *Finite Creature,* the work of His Hands, whom He in His inconceivable Love wills to make a sharer in His Own Blessedness, and in what manner the human soul becomes a partaker in the Divine Nature.

God is Self-existent, which Theologians call His Aseitas —" His of Himselfness." St. Jerome says, " Deus ipse sui origo est suaeque causa substantiae . . ignis absque calore intellegi non potest ; ergo sicut ignis est a se calidus, ita Deus est a se Deus." Again, St. John Chrysostom, " Deum sine initio esse et ingenitum et a eternum scio, modum autem nescio." The human soul exists not of herself, she depends for her existence upon God : He made her.

God is His Own Blessedness. He is supremely happy in Himself. He depends upon no other for He *is* supreme and perfect Happiness. Had He never created this Universe, His Blessedness would be no less than it is now. The essential blessedness of God is the ceaseless flow of Love between the three Divine Persons, and no creation *ad extra* adds or can add anything to God's perfect Beatitude.

It is evident that the human soul cannot participate in the Divine Essence, since she is created she cannot become uncreate; since she depends for her happiness upon Him she can never partake in His Essential Blessedness in the sense that she becomes the source of her own Blessedness. Deus est beatitudo per essentiam suam, non enim per adeptionem aut participationem, alicujus alterius beatus est, *sed per essentiam suam.* The Divine Essence is incommunicable.

The human soul is not, and never can be, her own blessedness; she can never find her happiness in herself, but in another by particpation. Every soul seeks happiness outside herself, she either seeks it in creatures *where it cannot be found,* or by the touch of Grace finds it in *God where alone it can be found.*

"*Homines sunt beati* sicut ibidem Boetus *per participationem* sicut dii per participationem dicuntur."

The soul, then, finds her happiness not in herself but in another, and the only other in which she can find full and perfect happiness is God. Hungry for happiness she may strive to satisfy her hunger in creatures, but she strives in vain, for insignificant and nothing as she is, He who made her for Himself alone, has so fashioned her that she never can find joy and happiness in any created being however lovable, but must even, though late, turn to Him and find there the Light and Love for which she longs so ardently.

What, then, is this oneing with God, by which the creature becomes God by participation? What means St. Peter when he says "Efficiamini Divinae consortes

naturae," or St. Augustine in that wonderful sentence in which he sums up the whole theology of the incarnation: "Factus est Deus homo ut homo fieret Deus."

The answer is simple: it is the *participation in the life of God by Love.* "DEUS CARITAS EST ET QUI MANET IN CARITATE, *IN DEO MANET ET DEUS IN EO.*"

From the very first moment when by Baptism the supernatural life is infused into the soul, she is lifted up into a certain participation in the Divinity, and this Divine Life grows and increases, if she place no obstacle to God's action within her, until by her mystic marriage she partakes of the Divine Life in all its fulness, and her actions become deified. And "this participation must not be likened to a mere moral assimilation, nor yet virtual, that is to say, by mode of action only, but something physical and objective, neither a participation in some attribute, but in the nature, neque participationem *tantum alicujus attributi, sed naturae.*[1]"

St. Basil says, "Like as bodies by contact with the sun's rays become glistening and transparent above their own nature, and give forth from themselves another brilliancy, even thus souls inspired and illuminated by the Holy Ghost become themselves spiritualized and give forth grace to others. Hinc cum Deo similitudo et quo nihil sublimius expeti potest, hinc est *ut Deus fias.*"

The illustration used by St. Paul of the wild olive grafted on to the olive tree will help us to form at least some idea of the manner of this wonderful participation of the human soul in the Divine Life of God. "Thou being a wild olive are ingrafted in them, and art made a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree." The ingrafted branch from the very moment of its ingrafting begins to partake of the life of the tree in which it is grafted. Its own life finally ceases and thenceforward its whole life is derived from the life of the tree. True it is still a branch, and the tree is still the tree, and if the branch was taken away the

[1] Hurter. Theo. Dog. III., p. 161.

tree would remain as it was before, but supposing it to remain the life flowing through it from the tree changes even its nature so that it becomes conformed to the tree from whence it draws its life. So is it with the human soul from the first moment of her being grafted into Christ. She begins to partake of His Life ; her own life, supposing she is responsive to the flowing tide of Grace becomes wholly His, yet without any loss of her own personality ; *her identification with Him* is the identification of Love through the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. Even the simplest soul can understand this fact and realize that while there is this *identification of Life* there cannot be *identification of Essence. God alone is,* as He said to St. Catherine of Sienna : " I am He that is, thou she that is not." Her life, her love, her blessedness, all depend absolutely and utterly from Him.

Again, Jesus says : " I am the vine, you are the branches ; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither can you except you abide in Me." The Life of the soul wedded to God is a *participated life,* as is the whole supernatural life from its inception to its triumphant consummation in Heaven.

The soul draws everything from Him, but He is His Own Life as He is His Own Beatitude. He is Life, and it is only by sharing in His Life that the soul lives. And this participation is through Love, because God is Love, and to share in God's Life is to share in His Love. Only in the mystic oneing of the soul with God can love find its full and perfect consummation. Natural love has limits for " *Amantes desiderant ex ambobus fieri unum* sed quia ex hoc accideret aut ambos aut alterum corrumpi, quaerunt unionem quae convenit et decet, ut scilicet simul conversentur, et simul colloquantur, et in aliis hujusmodi conjungantur."

That which natural love cannot attain although it desire it, is attained by supernatural love, since the end of the supernatural life is the transformation of the soul into God in such wise that her nature becomes likened to His, and her life becomes His.

This transformation into God is by Love; how often when we see a wonderful change wrought by grace in a soul we exclaim of such a one, "She is transformed," and that is true; and this transformation affects the whole nature, and sometimes even the physical appearance of the person. It is of this transformation that St. Paul speaks when he exclaims: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and the soul can say with St. Agnes, "Posuit signum in faciem meam, ut nullu praeter eum amatorem admittam."

St. John of the Cross says: "Love to be perfect must have these two properties: it must consume and transform the soul in God." The burning and transformation wrought in the soul by the flame must give no pain, but this can be only in the *state of the blessed* where the flame is sweet love, for in this transformation of the soul therein *there* is a blessed agreement and contentment on both sides . . but this transformation is not like that which is wrought in this life when though most perfect, *and in love consummate* was still in some measure consuming the soul and wearing it away. It was like fire in burning coals, for though the coals may be transformed into fire, and made like it, and ceased from seething, and smoke no more arises from them as before they were wholly transformed into fire, still though they have become perfect fire, the fire consumes them and reduces them to ashes."

"So is it with the soul which in this life is transformed by perfect love, for though she be wholly consumed, yet she still suffers, in some measure both pain and loss. Pain, as a result of the beatific transformation which is still wanting, loss through the weakness of the flesh coming in contact with love so strong and so deep."[1]

Whenever St. John of the Cross and other mystical writers speak of the soul as becoming God, they always understand a *participation by love*. In the "Spiritual Canticle" St. John of the Cross says in his comment on

[1] St. John of the Cross, "Spiritual Canticle," Stanza xxxix., pp. 301–2.

the prayer of Jesus, " That they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." . . " I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one. . ." We are not to suppose from this that Our Lord prayed that the Saints might become one in *essence and nature as the Father and the Son are*, but that they might become one in the union of love as the Father and the Son are one in the oneness of love. Souls have by participation that Very God which the Son has by nature, and are therefore really Gods by participation like unto God, one of His Society.[1]

A word of explanation may be well here concerning Chapter III. of this book. From the very first moment grace is infused into the soul, she partakes in some degree in the Divine Life, and this degree varies in almost every soul, for no two souls respond to Grace in the same way, consequently they do not progress at the same speed or in like manner. Even in Heaven it is true that there is inequality, for although each soul beholds God as He is in Himself *totaliter*[2] yet, " pro meritorem tamen diversitate alium alio perfectius.[3] "

In fact, not all come to the fulness of the supernatural life of love in this world, hence there is a Purgatory, by which they come to it hereafter; there are many whose service is one of fear more than of love, though even so there must be some love, even if only a little, but when we come to the fuller development of the supernatural life, " Perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem: quaniam timor poenam habet; qui autem timet, non est perfectus in caritate."

In the supernatural life there is no hard and fast line. The stages of mystical experience are not a series of water-tight compartments, but rather an undulating country of hills and valleys, gradually ascending to the very summit

[1] St. John of the Cross, " Spiritual Canticle," Stanza xxxix., pp. 294–5.

[2] See S. Thomas, " Summa," Pars Prima, Quæs. xii., Art. vii., for the whole explanation of the way in which the soul sees God in the light of glory.

[3] Council of Florence.

of the Carmel of God ; hence this broad distinction between lovers and servants is rather the attitude of the soul in her relation with God, than a division. Every soul that has begun her supernatural life in fear is a potential lover, there is not a single soul, however imperfect, that with many falls and failings is striving to live the supernatural life that may not aspire to become a lover of Jesus, and reach forth even in this world to the very highest reach of supernatural Life, the mystical marriage itself. Nothing has held souls back in their advance to God more than the utterly false notion that anything beyond the most elementary spiritual experience was not for them, but only for a select few. The mystical marriage *ratified on earth by Love consummated in Heaven by vision* is open to all. All may dare to ask this favour of the Divine Lover even here below as surely as they must come to it hereafter if they are to possess eternal life in the heavenly country.

Love is both the most wonderful thing in the world and the most wonderful power in the world, whether we look at it under the natural or supernatural aspect.

The soul quickened by love will go to perfection with surprising swiftness, make the most heroic sacrifices ; to love nothing will seem impossible ; indeed, I might say more, nothing will be impossible. More and more I am convinced that love and love alone can renew the world.

The heart of the Catholic religion is love. Jesus, the Divine Lover, has come on earth to find lovers. His appeal is for lovers, He desires above all to be loved, and loved extremely, extravagantly, for love always is extreme, always is extravagant. You cannot restrain love ; it is irresistible, mounts every barrier, triumphs over every difficulty, laughs at every obstacle. Love will have its way, be the end what it may.

And the world is ready for the reign of love ; everywhere we mark the signs of this new awakening. We seem to be entering on the Age of Love ; Soeur Therese of Lisieux has been its great Apostle : " I will be love in the heart of the Church," the child cried : and indeed she has been

that to the full. It would seem as if her ardent desire was already being fulfilled : she has indeed let fall her promised shower of roses, and the roses have kindled love.

The great Apostolate of Father Matteo, what is it but the apostolate of love ? Everywhere souls are longing, hungering for love.

This supernatural love-life is the only real life. It is not knowledge, but love that really makes life ; knowledge alone is mere existence. In the natural order two may have perfectly well known each other for years, and yet the fact of each other's existence has made no impression on the one or the other ; but let love spring up between these two and from being mere existences they become *everything* to each other.

So it is supernaturally ; a soul may have known for years the facts of Faith, and yet these facts have exercised no influence on her life ; they are only facts like many other facts ; but there comes that wonderful moment when love awakes in the soul, and Jesus from a mere Name fills her whole heart and life. Then all the facts of Faith spring to life : they become vital and all the world is changed at the magic touch of supernatural love. As one has well said : " This interior life lived with Jesus, our attachment to and union with Him, and through Him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, this *is* life, *our* life, the only thing to live for, without which all else is dead and worthless and meaningless."

But Love is not alone the most wonderful thing, or the most wonderful power, it is also the most amazing paradox in the world.

It produces at the same time in the soul of the lover the most unutterable joy and the most inconceivable pain : how these two contrary movements can spring from the same source and co-exist in the soul at the same time is a mystery, of which there is no adequate explanation. There are arid wastes, desolating darknesses, every conceivable kind of interior anguish, flashes of joy and love, that give the soul relief, patches of white sunshine, depths of starless

shade. Yet no fact in mystical experience is more absolutely certain or more constantly verified.

The Light and the Love : these two are inseparable ; for it is only through this Light that the soul knows God, and knowing, flames with love towards Him. Now this Light, which manifests the Divine Lover, in all the amazing and inexpressible magnificence of His matchless love, manifests also to the soul her misery and unworthiness ; the more clearly it manifests His greatness, the more clearly it manifests her littleness.

The burning of love that surges up to the Divine Lover in such a resistless tide in this beholding, also burns with terrible fierceness against herself, for every defect, every fault and every failure it manifests cause the most piercing agony to the soul in love, so that she loathes and hates herself just in proportion as she adores and loves Him. This blended joy and pain continue to be the soul's experience till every defect and stain being consumed by burning love, she comes to her Marriage with the Eternal Word. Thenceforward the soul perceives only the burning of joyous love : there is no pain, for there is nothing left for love's fire to consume. The piercing joy of this love becomes so intense that the soul feels she must die of its very sweetness ; indeed, at last it does become so strong that she can bear no longer its fiery ardour ; the tiny thread that links her to earth is broken, and she comes to the full consummation of her married life in Heaven.

This life of love is open to all, to the soul hidden away in the cloister, to the soul busy in the hot glare of the world.

The one sure cloister *is the cloister of the heart,* where Jesus and the soul live their love-life together, untroubled and undisturbed by all the riot and tumult of the world without ; with every movement of memory, mind and imagination stilled, every desire quelled, there in that silent cloister of the heart the soul is flooded with the calm tranquil peace of perfect love, and lies in glad content in the embrace of her Divine Lover. The outward cloister

matters little; the inward cloister of the heart matters much.

It is to little purpose to shut out the vision of the exterior world, if imagination and memory rove over it as they will, for then the soul is more without than she was before; once enter the cloister of the heart and then even if she live in the midst of the restless tossing of this world's troubled throng, there will be perfect peace within. It is for lovers that the Divine Lover is calling. He comes, this Jesus, with the great red wounds, so cruelly gashed in hands and feet and side. He comes, this Jesus, with His body all rent, all torn, all bleeding. He comes, this Jesus, with His Head crowned with cruel thorns, with His Face disfigured by wounds and blows, with His eyes filled with blood. He comes to seek for lovers. His precious arms are stretched out wide ready to embrace the soul that will made her response to His appeal, and say to Him: "Oh, my darling Jesus, I take you for my Love and my All. My Love, I want to be everything to You, and You shall be everything to me!" He will embrace her with those blood-stained Arms of His and the thrill of love will surge through her at His touch.

Victims of Love, those who will love to love's extreme limit, love without reserve, love with such love that they shall sacrifice themselves loving victims to His All-merciful Love; it is for those our Jesus is calling. It is for souls like these that He asks.

When the Eternal Word came into this world in quest of lovers, He wrought His first miracle at a Marriage feast, and seeing the purpose of His quest, it was fitting that it should be so.

He had come to call souls to their marriage with Himself, and this wedding which was glorified by His presence was a shadowing forth of that which was to be.

"And Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was there," and her swift-seeing eye saw how the wine had failed, and she tells her Son. "Although His hour had not yet come" yet at her unspoken request, for she needed not to put it

in words to Him, He wrought the miracle her love asked of Him.

Here is shewn forth the place of Mary in the mystic love-life of the lovers of her Son. In wonderful wise souls are falling in love with Him ; love is stirring many hearts in a measure exceeding all that has gone before : it seems indeed as if Love's hour had come, and it is coming through the pleading of the Mother : " They have no wine," she says to Him. " They have not the wine that maketh virgins, that sets them on fire with love for You." And He grants her asking, for how shall she ever ask in vain as she can never ask amiss ?

The wine of love is flowing, souls are drinking thereof, and that draught is setting the love-fever aflame within them.

Mary, Mother of Grace, is also Mary, Mother of Holy Love : she is saying to her children on earth, those for whom she has obtained the Love-draught : " Whatsoever He says to you, do it."

Mary, Mother of Holy Love, by your pleading, obtain the wine of Love for a multitude of love-victims for Your Son. Mother, may these victims hear you speaking, and hearing haste to fulfil your behest, " Whatsoever He says, do it. Mary, sweet Mother, may this book through your prayers obtain new lovers for your Son, lovers who shall become victims to the fervour of their Love.

CHAPTER I

GOD IS LOVE

The greatest fact in the world, the greatest power in the world, the greatest reality in the world is love. And love is the greatest power, the greatest fact and the greatest reality because God Himself *is* Love, and all human love is but the faintest far-off reflection of the Infinite Love of God.

Natural love comes forth from God. Every single manifestation of love that has ever been made in the natural order in this world has come forth from God Who is the source of all love, natural and supernatural.

This vast universe was created by Infinite Love; only love moved the God of Love to speak the creative word and set the world in being. He created us in love, fashioned us to His Own image and likeness in love, and in love destined us to be partakers of His Own Divine Nature.

And love alone after man's sin moved God to send His Sole-begotten Son into the world for its redemption: God became Man, that man might be lifted up into God. God descended that man might ascend. God humbled Himself and took on Himself the form of a slave, that man might be exalted and uplifted to a participation in the Divine Nature.

God is Love. All the manifold manifestations of human love shewn through the long ages of the world's existence, all the manifestations of love at this moment, and all that shall be shewn in ages yet

to be, are simply a welling up of love from that exhaustless fount of Love—God; yet only the feeblest and faintest reflection of the Infinite Love of God Himself.

The love of the earthly father for his children is a reflection of the Father-love of God. When you see the love of the father for his children, as you do see it even in these days, so strong and tender, so self-sacrificing and self-forgetting, so patient and so forgiving, when you look on such a manifestation of Fatherhood you are looking on a human reflection of the *Fatherhood of God.* How the father pours out his love on his children, toils for them, watches over them, strives to give them pleasure and surprise them with his gifts; his love runs through all his relations with his children.

But what is the most wonderful manifestation of the earthly father's love, compared to the measureless love of God for His children. The love of God exceeds a million, million times the love of every human father that ever has been or shall be. Their love has measure, God loves without measure.

The Father-love of God is whole, entire and complete for each one of His children : He follows them, watches over and protects them, goes after them with a love that never changes, for with Him is no shadow of alteration. Even if the children in their folly forget Him and strive to find their happiness in created things, His love follows them, bears with them, waits for them to recover their senses and return to Him Who alone can satisfy all the longings of their hearts.

He *is* Our Father; and the great tide of His Love is ever around us, unchangeable, unutterable.

Look again at the love of the mother for her child. How wonderfully selfless is the devotion with which she loves; I am speaking of mothers

who really love their children, for the mother who really loves her child cares for nothing save the supreme good and the supreme happiness of her child: self has no place in real love. See the mother when her child lies sick and racked with pain; she never wearies, she never tires, she watches by night and by day, she never for a moment thinks of her own needs, her life is bound up with the life of her child, she fights with death and prevails and brings the child back to life, because Love is stronger even than death. See the mother even when her children go into sin, when they forget her utterly, and selfishly think only of the satisfaction of their lusts and passions; the mother loves on and hopes on and prays on. She will not abandon them, she will by the strength of her love win them back to God—even from the gates of Hell. She welcomes the one who has pierced her heart home again and forgives as only the mother can. She loved on, although her child had forgotten her; she could not forget. That mother-love seems inexhaustible, all but infinite; yet it is exhaustible because, wonderful as it is, her love is yet finite. All that mother-love shewn through the ages flows forth from God, for that mother-love exists in God in an infinite degree, and every shewing of it that has been seen on this earth, even that most marvellous and wonderful Mother-Love of all—the love of the Immaculate Mother for her Divine Child—is only a reflection of the Mother-Love of God. There is a *Motherhood of God* as well as a Fatherhood.

This Mother-love of God for His children He Himself has declared with a most wonderful tenderness: "Can the mother forget the child she bore?" Yes: seemingly impossible, that is a possibility: "Yes, she may forget, but yet shall I never forget." In an exhaustless stream does God ever pour down

this double love upon all His children. He is Father and Mother, He is Brother, He is Sister, He is more, He is Lover. How wonderfully sister can love sister, brother love brother, and sister love brother, you can see, when you come upon a family where love binds all in one. They do not need to go outside their own circle for anything, they are sufficient for each other, they cannot bear even a temporary separation, it seems like Hell to be separated, as it is like Heaven to be united. They are self-forgetting, each striving to give pleasure to the other, each striving to give some new token of their love. Of course this can only be where there is real love; but it is only with true love that we are concerned. All this love is only the expression of the Brother-love and the Sister-love of God. God tabernacled in the flesh turned to His children and said: "Behold My mother, My sister and My brother; whoso shall do the will of My Father in Heaven, he is My brother, sister and mother."

Yet there is a greater love even in the natural order than these—the love of lovers—something quite unique—that stands alone; because it arises not between those who are bound together by the ties of blood, but between two who are strangers to each other. You can never know when, where or how this love will come, but when it comes it claims the first place; all else must give way to it. The love of home, of father, of mother, of brother, of sister, all these must give place to the imperious claim of this love that has sprung into being between two who were strangers, and now are lovers, and bound by a love so fierce in its intensity that the light and heat of its burning overwhelm all else.

This love in the natural order claims the first place, and the Divine Lover Himself has allowed

its claim. He says, yes, for this love one shall leave home, father, mother, sisters, brothers, everything, and you " two shall become one flesh." This is human love in its highest reach. It comes with the swiftness of lightning, unsought, unexpected. But it comes, and when it comes it is absolute in its claim and brooks no rival. It is only of this love that we say of the two united by it, they are lovers. Of other loves you may say they are like lovers, you would almost think they are lovers, it is only of this love that you say they *are* lovers.

Love is the great reality, and love, true love, has always something in it that is terrible, just because it is real. It is love of which we speak, not passion or emotion : these are not and never can be love, although often mistaken for love. There is something sacred and something terrible in real love, something fierce, something piercing and relentless. Mere emotion may at times and for a while appear like real love, but it lacks the constancy that is the hall-mark of love. Passion, too, may look like love, but it is not love and never can be. Passion and emotion never rest for long on the same object, but love is the constant direction of heart and will to the one loved and that one alone.

God is the Divine Lover; all the love of earthly lovers for each other, splendid, heroic and magnificent as it is, when compared with the Love of the Divine Lover is as nothing.

If human love seems so relentless in its course, if, as it seem, nothing in the world can stop it, what is it compared to the fiery burning of this Divine Love that knows no limits or bounds. Jesus the Divine Lover has come down from Heaven clothed in the weakness of our human flesh to seek for lovers. He is *the* Lover. He is Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Friend, but above and beyond all

these He is the Lover; this is so amazing, so overwhelming that it is not surprising that men have failed to grasp its tremendous significance. He is the Bridegroom, the soul is the Bride; the soul is to be married to this Bridegroom, and this Bridegroom is God. By this marriage she is not only to be united to Him, but to be transformed and pass into Him; the union of this Divine Marriage Deifies the soul: she becomes one spirit with her Love.

That He should be Father is wonderful, that He should be Mother is wonderful, that He should be Brother and Sister is wonderful, but that He should be the Lover, this so exceeds all conception that it is no wonder as the truth of it grows on the soul, there are moments when the marvel of it so overcomes her as to deprive her of her senses; yet it is true, it is no dream, no fancy, but *the great reality*. He, the Divine Lover, is in love with His creature and she with Him, little, worthless and insignificant though she be.

Earthly love, with all its burning ardour and fiery sacrifice, falls into its own nothingness in the presence of this Divine Lover and His matchless love. Love will do and dare anything, and the soul, greatly daring, looks up into the Eyes of God and reads there the Great Mystery, the wonderful secret, the Great Sacrament of her union with her Lover.

This Divine Lover came down from His splendid throne and all the worship of adoring angels in Heaven, and clothed Himself in human flesh, that in that human flesh He might approach the soul and she might not be terrified by the awful shining of the white light of His glory. So He veils it all and comes to her beneath the shroud of humanity to draw her to Divinity. Had He not come thus how could she even have dared believe

her destiny was to be married to God. She has nothing in her that could attract such love as this; yet Infinite Love loved her, despite all the disfiguring marks of sin upon her, despite everything He loved her, and He comes to lie in the cold on the straw of the Cave of Bethlehem to manifest to her His love. He has come to draw, to attract lovers to Himself.

But love must give all, so He gives all. Look at this Jesus Who is in love with the soul. He has come after her, and has given all for her and paid the price and bought her in His Blood. There on the stark, cruel gibbet of the Cross is this Divine Lover; He is crowned—with thorns crushed into His Head; the blood flows in hot red streams over His Face, and that Face is bruised and torn; His Hands are pierced with the great red wounds; the nails hold Him fast on this awful throne; His Feet they are gashed with great red wounds like to His Hands. His Body, how red it is: yes, it is red, it is the redness of His Blood. His Body is rent and torn, there is no whole part in Him, the lash has torn every fibre; His royal raiment, what is it—His Blood. Here is Love, not human, but Divine, in all the splendour of Its infinite Majesty. The Eyes of Love—the Eyes of God look down on the soul with a love so tender and so piercing that the Soul is caught by its flame, set on fire by its burning. The Divine Lover has gained the love He came to win. She feels the thrilling movement of love, it has come, and she is desperately and daringly in love with this Jesus, Whose love will not be denied.

The Divine Lover is here to seek for lovers. There is no love that can compare to His, there is no answering response to love that can ever compare with the response to His. Once the soul is in love with Him she is capable of anything;

without His love she can do nothing, but once that flame is burning within her she can do and dare all things,—because it is this Jesus with the great red wounds Who is living in her. She lives His life, He lives her life, and burns in her with the burning of His Love. He is ever coming with fresh power, His Love is ever surging in with greater strength; ever welling up within her, the exhaustless fountain of everlasting life.

A certain learned minister was once asked : " Can a soul be in love with Jesus in the same way, and love with the same strength as with an earthly lover?" And he made answer that it was not possible to love Jesus with a love as strong as that.

That is not true, the whole experience of two thousand years declares it is not true,—the human heart has, and the human heart can love this Jesus not only with a love as great as that of the most ardent human lover, but with a love transcending the most ardent love of the human kind that the world has ever known. No, the most wonderful human love sinks into utter insignificance compared with the fiery burning of love in the heart of the one who has been touched by the Divine Lover. The martyrs, blazing with love, went joyfully like brides to their Marriage, and they went joyfully because they were indeed married to Him in His Sacrifice as well as to His Divinity. If you are in love with Me you must leave *everything*. Father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, home—all; then I shall be your Love. I shall be All to you and you shall be all to Me : it is in this way Jesus speaks to the soul to-day as He has spoken through the ages, from the beginning when He called His first lovers around Him.

To what a tremendous extent the religious world has been blinded about God. God is Love; yet how great has been the overshadowing of this great

fact. Nothing has done so much to hold souls back from any advance in the spiritual life as the paralysing setting forth of the terrors of the Lord. The Devil once mounted the pulpit and preached a sermon—perhaps he has done that more than once—on the dreadful might and majesty of God; when he descended from the pulpit he left the hearers paralysed with terror and fear; the Saint who was standing by and knew who he was, said to him, "Whatever did you preach a sermon like that for?" And the Devil made answer: "That is all right; I have terrified them, but I have not made them weep." There was nothing in his sermon to draw the hot tears of love from the eyes of his listeners. No heresy perhaps has wrought so much mischief in the spiritual world as the Jansenistic heresy. It set forth in terrifying terms the fearful justice and Infinite Majesty of God. The Sacraments became not means to help the soul to become God's lover, but the reward of Sanctity. For a year you might prepare yourself to receive the Body of the Lord, and even then the chances were you would only receive to your damnation. It has affected to a terrible extent even the views of Catholics concerning God. The heresy has been cast out of the Church for more than a hundred years, but its influence yet remains. I have again and again seen souls driven from God by this utterly false conception of Him. God the Lover!—why scarcely might the soul dare to think of herself as the slave in relation to Him, much less anything higher. God too often has been set forth as a person in a state of normal bad temper, Who would be angry if you looked there, angry if you turned to the right and angry if you turned to the left, ready to let the thunderbolt of His wrath fall upon you at any moment. The Devil never minds such doctrine as this; he comforts himself

with the reflection that "the preachers are doing my work for me." As long as the fire of love is not kindled in the soul he is not troubled. Yet the Divine Lover has come to cast the fire of His Love upon the earth, that it may flame up in the human heart. It is not surprising that so often souls find religion unsatisfactory; the most essential element of all—love—being left out, what can there be but a sense of dissatisfaction—a soul-hunger for the love without which there is no living, vital religious life at all.

Let the great truth be known, God is Love.

God is the Divine Lover, His Love is so strong and so compelling that once the soul is touched by it, everything of this world falls dead at her feet. Her Lover, her Jesus, fills all her life, satisfies all her desires; all her longings, all her unsatisfied aspirations find their full and entire satisfaction in Him. Love and love alone can fill the heart; that is why it is that the heart is restless; finding nothing in the whole creation that can satisfy it.

The Divine Lover, with all His Infinite Love, He alone can satisfy this poor little heart, so small and yet so great because made to fall in love with God Himself. She hears her Jesus saying to her: "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and her Lover's Voice stirs her to eager response.

God has come to seek and find not terrified slaves or servants—but Lovers.

His Love mounts above love of father and mother, brother and sister to the love of the Lover.

God is Love, and because God is Love, all our relations with Him are simplified.

Love is unafraid: where love is perfect there is no fear. The fear of the Lord is only the beginning of wisdom, but the perfection of love casts out all fear. When the soul has come to this perfection of love, she has come to her Marriage with God,

and henceforth fear has no place; the love of the soul and the love of God have become one love—just as a small flame joined to a great fire becomes one with it, so that henceforth its light and burning are that of the fire, so is it with this burning of love when the soul is oned with God. She rests with sweet assurance on the Love of the Divinity.

This Love carries the soul victorious through all the conflicts, storms and temptations of earth, through all the sorrows, trials and tribulations of time; indeed, love absorbed in love passes through them all as scarce perceiving them because held fast in the Light of Love. Dwelling in love she dwells in God and God dwells in her. She knows the wonder of His Love, and it grows more and more to her every day. She says, " God is Love—absolute Love; He is my Lover as if I was the only soul existing in all His great universe. He is all mine. He loved me, He gave Himself for me, He is mine, my very own, and I am all His. I hear my Love saying to me, ' Look at Me, look at the blood, the thorns, the red wounds, how wide open they are; look at My tortured, disfigured Body. This is My love for you. I am your Lover, and you cannot refuse a love like Mine. This is how I have loved you, and I your Lover, I am God.' "

CHAPTER II

ALL ARE CALLED TO THE MARRIAGE

Every soul that shall be saved must come to her marriage with God, for that is the end of the supernatural life. Heaven is the full participation of the soul in the very life of God Himself, by which through the transforming union of marriage she becomes one spirit with God, to Whom she is joined; it is only in this supernatural union of the creature with the Creator that love attains its perfect triumph, of which earthly marriage is only a shadow.

What is the mystical life but the life of love set up between two by which two become one. "Would you know who this Bridegroom is and who His Bride? The Bridegroom is God; the Bride is the soul."

Factus est Deus homo ut homo fieret Deus. God became Man that man might become God. That is the purpose of the Incarnation, the taking up of humanity into Divinity, the uplifting of the creature into the Creator.

Natural love when it is the reality and not some mere passing fancy or emotion, is always a constant impulse urging the two who are in love to perfect union. These two love in such a degree that they would pass into each other if that were possible; but to that they may not come, for merely natural love can never reach the consummation it desires; there is a barrier beyond which it may not pass. A life of union together by marriage is the nighest

they may come to that perfect oneing together to which their love reaches forth.

But that which is denied to natural love is given to supernatural love, for through the marriage of the soul with God, the two are not merely joined together, but actually become thus one that they are no longer two but one. They pass into each other and become each other. Love finds its perfect consummation in this amazing transformation of the creature into the Creator. It is here and here alone that the longing desire of love is satisfied, merely natural love can never reach its desire: those who love can never be so identified as to cease to be two and become one, there is always the consciousness that their love cannot attain what it desires.

In the spiritual marriage with God the soul is taken up into a participation in the Divinity, and so one with God that her acts are His and His are hers.

To this every soul is called that is destined to everlasting life, for everlasting life is the soul's participation in God's life. Mysticism is nothing else than the soul's falling in love with God, and progressing in that love till purified from everything that offends the Divine Lover she becomes deified by the transforming union of the mystical marriage.

To every soul in a state of grace is it said: "All things are ready, come to the marriage"; for marriage is the normal consummation of supernatural love as it is of natural love. Of no single soul in the state of grace can we say that she is incapable of attaining the state of marriage with God, because to her is offered the Grace *remotely sufficient*, and if she heed the call she will have grace *proximately efficacious* by which she may attain her end.

What is the common life of Grace, that is of a soul living in a state of friendship with God?

Gratia sanctificans est donum Dei permanens quo homo in ordinem supernaturalem elevatur et naturae divinae aliquo modo particeps fit. Sanctifying Grace is a permanent gift of God by which a man is raised to the supernatural state and becomes in a certain measure partaker in the Divine Nature.

So the ordinary life of Grace is a participation in the Divine Nature, not the full participation of marriage, but yet a real participation, in some souls more, in others less, according to the degree of their response to the action of Grace upon them.

Now the mystical life is simply the participation in its fulness of the Divine Life of love. The essential principle of both the ordinary common life of Grace and the mystical life is the same; the infusion of the Graces and Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

If the interior life of the soul is to progress as it ought and her purification is to be completed, she must experience the *passive* purgation which belongs properly to the mystical life, and if she advances thus far, who shall place a limit to what she may reach? Who shall say that the Mystical Marriage is not for her?

The purification of the soul and her subsequent mystic marriage with God must come either in this world, in which case she passes straight into Heaven at the moment of death, or hereafter, through her purification in purgatory; then, once her purgation is completed she is oned with God, and being oned with Him immediately enters Heaven. This truth is *de fide* as the Council of Florence declares: "The souls of men if they depart this life truly penitent in the love of God, before they have satisfied by worthy fruits of penitence for sins of commission and omission, are purified after death in the pains of Purgatory . . . and the souls of those who after having received

baptism have incurred no stain of sin and those who having been stained by sin have completed their purification either while yet in the body or after their going forth of the body, immediately enter Heaven and behold God One and Three face to face."

To those who would limit the call to the mystical life and its culmination the Mystic Marriage of the soul with God, we answer that the call to perfection is universal; to all it is said, "Be ye perfect," to all it is said, "Come to the marriage," and although it is true that so great a number of those who are saved never attain that union before leaving this world, that is not because they are not called, but because they do not respond to the calling with that generosity which the call demands. For this call is to something so great and so magnificent and so transcending all human thought that the soul must sacrifice and abandon everything to attain it. It is just here that so very many fail—because they will not forsake all to find *The All.*

But this failure of so many is no more an argument against the fact of the universality of the call, than the loss of so many souls is an argument against the fact that every soul has offered to her sufficient grace to attain salvation. God's will is that all should come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Neither does this call to the mystical life depend on place or surroundings. It is not a special call to a select few, it is not only for souls who have consecrated themselves to God in the cloister, but to all who are in the grace of God. Every soul in the grace of God is capable of the Divine union, because in every such soul there is the beginning of Divine love, and this love is capable of indefinite increase. If the soul hears the call to perfection, the love will grow ever stronger and stronger, and

burn with ever greater fierceness, until the soul is one fiery furnace of love, and she comes even here below to the full participation in the Divine Love, and so becomes God.

The mystical life must not be confounded with certain extraordinary manifestations which sometimes accompany it. It is possible, without revelations, voices and visions, to come to the perfection of transforming union; indeed these graces are rather *gratis datae* for the help and light of others, than *gratia faciens*. So, to endeavour to narrow down the mystical life to certain extraordinary manifestations would be utterly to mislead and misdirect souls. Indeed, the teaching of every master of the mystical life, and in particular of St. John of the Cross, is that all extraordinary graces are to be suspected and resisted. The mystical life is the soul's being in love with Jesus crucified and so inflamed with this love, that until she is one with her Love everything else seems to her as naught; she passes every gift, rests in no spiritual consolation, indeed scarce heeds them even when granted, but ever presses unrestingly towards her Love Himself and her perfect oneing with Him.

So the call to the marriage is for all, for to all is it said: "Come to the marriage, for all things are ready."

The grace remote and sufficient is offered to all, and all would attain even in this world their end, if they hearkened to the call, for then the grace would become efficacious and every response would draw them nearer to the final triumph.

Nothing has held back souls so much as the utterly mistaken notion that anything beyond the ordinary, common life of grace is not for them, it was something quite special which only the monks of the Charterhouse or the nuns of Carmel might dare to aspire to.

The Kingdom of God is within you, and not around you. Surroundings and place are so utterly secondary that they may safely be left out of count.

All that is required is a generous and ready response to the Voice of the Divine Lover calling the soul to Himself. If, as she hears His Voice she perceives that love is stirring within her, that she is indeed falling in love with this Lover Who has pursued her so long and sought her so tenderly, then there is no limit to which that love may not grow : there is no limit of time, for a generous soul, giving herself entirely up to love, will speed with wonderful swiftness to the marriage. It is not a question of time but of intensity. One soul in a few weeks will advance more quickly than another in as many years, because love begets love, and the more generous and responsive the soul, the quicker she will overcome every obstacle and attain her end.

And the call does not depend on the learning or the culture of the called, for the most learned and the least learned are alike capable of love. And the essence of the mystical life is love. Every soul is a potential lover : every soul can become an actual lover. Every soul *can* come to the marriage with God even here and now, as surely as, if she is one of God's elect, she *must* in Eternity.

CHAPTER III

SERVANTS OR LOVERS?

Every soul destined to eternal life is likewise destined to her eternal marriage with God; this marriage is the final triumph, the eternal consummation of love.

It is love that brings the soul to this marvellous transformation of herself into God. When we look out on the world of souls that constitute the kingdom of God upon earth we see that these souls fall into two distinct classes—servants and lovers.

The great majority of souls in the kingdom never pass beyond the state of servants in this world: they only attain the state of lovers through the great purgation of Purgatory in the next.

Now the difference between these two states is the difference between the ordinary state of spiritual experience and that of the mystical state: those who are servants only reach what we may call the common spiritual experience, while those who are lovers attain to the mystical state.

There is the difference between the two states, because although Grace works from the very first moment of the soul's conscious turning from sin and her realization of eternal reality: yet it is only when love awakes and stirs the soul that she really enters on her mystical experience.

The mystical state is the soul falling in love with Jesus, and Jesus quickening the soul by the touch of His Living Presence.

The state of the servant is normally that of fear of the Lord : that of the lover, love of Him.

The servant does have some love for the master, but it is a love in which fear predominates, while in the case of the lover, it is not merely that love predominates and overcomes fear, but that this love when finally perfected casts out fear altogether, for she that feareth is not perfected in love.

The servant is a servant and sees all things from the view-point of the servant : Jesus Himself says the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth : he sees his Lord do this and permit that, and he cannot understand why He does the one and permits the other. This explains the restless and unsatisfactory state of so many souls who are yet striving to lead a spiritual life. They are always afraid of their Lord, and always in dread of what He may demand next; they never cast themselves into the Arms of God without any reserve whatever : they are distrustful, even unconsciously, of His Providence and His Love.

How often the language of the servant is couched in tones of complaint : " I cannot understand why God deals with me like this : how can I reconcile His Love for me with the blows that fall upon me, the disappointments, the shattered hopes, the wreck and ruin of all my plans, when those plans have all been undertaken for what I believed was for His glory?"

This is the language of the servant, of the one to whom His Lord's Will seems hard and almost impossible to bear : true, he may with many a hard struggle finally come to conform his will to his Lord's, but it is only conformed because willing or unwilling, his Lord will have His way, whether the servant's acceptance of it be willing or unwilling.

To the servant His Lord often appears as an austere Master, " reaping where He has not sown,

and gathering where he has not strawed." "Yes: I see it is God's will, but He deals so hardly with me; He crushes me; indeed, the way He treats me I cannot understand. He seems hard and cruel."

Some even struggle against that will; they try to find all sorts of reasons why they should not submit to it: they blame the human instrument of it; not realising that every single happening is so utterly under God's control that without Him nothing whatever can happen either great or small.

It is this not understanding what the will of the Lord is, that marks off the state of the servant from that of the Lover.

And yet all are called to be Lovers. Jesus assumed our nature in order that we might become His Lovers and share all the burning love of His Divine Heart: every soul that has received the living spirit within her is a potential lover, since Jesus wants her for Himself alone, and will give her all His Love if she will give Him all hers.

The astonishing thing is that so many are content to be servants when the way of the lover is open to them: they hold back from giving Jesus everything, they are content just to get into Heaven at the last, they give just the very least they can to God. All this because they do not love.

The servant looks only to the commandments: what must be done and what must be avoided. In effect he says: "If the Lord will not be desperately angry with me I shall omit this duty or indulge that passion." He is ruled by the fear of the Lord, and "the fear of the Lord is only the beginning of Wisdom"; the consummation of wisdom is Love, for "perfect love casts out fear." No wonder to the eyes of the servant the world and all that happens in it seems so hard to understand. For over and over again there are happenings that are only understandable to the eyes of Love. Fear

brings no light and no solution of their mystery. For years we have striven and toiled and spent our strength to build up a work for God, and He takes it and smashes it: to the servant it is so crushing and overwhelming that he is cast into the depths of despair. He feels all is lost, that God has cast him off and disowned him. Often such a one becomes embittered against God and against the human instruments God has used in bringing about the seeming failure. The more he reflects on the particular happening, the more incomprehensible it appears, the more he looks at the human instruments, the more embittered he becomes against them. Oftentimes the rest of the life of such a one is clouded and shadowed by a sense of grievance against God and man.

Again, to how many is religion only a hard round of grinding service to a God Who exacts the last farthing, without one ray of love to warm the chill round of daily duty.

Now, the soul of the Lover sees all things from her Lover's point of view.

Love transforms all it touches: from the first moment when Love awakens and quickens the soul she is quivering with the thrill of her new life: the whole world has changed, for she has heard her Lover saying: "Behold I make all things new."

To the Lover the ways and acts of Love are always delightful, always pleasing. To the soul in love everything her Lover does is well: she knows that He Who acts is infinite in Love as well as in Power: He is not merely One Who knows with absolute certitude everything that shall befall her, but One Whose Love is as absolute as His certitude, and Whose every act permissive and absolute is ruled by that Love.

If Love takes and smashes the slowly built-up

gift of years of toil, all is well, because whatever Infinite Love does must be well.

The lover rejoices in the will of her Lover, cares nothing for herself, has no thought for self but only for Him. If He is pleased nothing else matters. She lives for the good pleasure of His Will, she would not change one single happening, even although she might give as much glory if it should be changed to meet her own desire; she would rather suffer and be crucified that His good pleasure might be satisfied.

To the soul of the Lover, pain becomes pleasure; she would not be free from suffering, for, after all, it is suffering that likens her to her Lover. She would share all His wounds and suffer all the bitterness of His Cross. Her Lover was thorn-crowned and lifted up, a red figure, dripping blood on the gibbet of the Cross: how can she rejoice save in being made like Him?

There is the great contrast between these two states, the one running and rejoicing in suffering and crucifixion: the other complaining, rebelling, and finding the way of the cross harsh and cruel.

The mystical life consists not in wonderful visions, not in voices, not in extraordinary revelations, but in this great, burning love, ever growing in power from that unforgettable moment of its first flashing on the soul till she is transformed into God Himself, sees in His sight and loves in His Love.

The soul of the lover has no desire, no wish but to be utterly and wholly given up to the will of her Lover. Because this love burns strong within her, she is impelled by a resistless impulse along the Calvary way: pierced through and through with a most sweet piercing, she can only be satisfied by suffering. Jesus is her very own Jesus, He comes to her with those great red wounds, so red and so

wide opened, with thorns crushed into His Head, with the whole Body red with the redness of His Blood, with Blood in His Eyes, and arms of love outstretched to embrace her. She looks into the fathomless tenderness of the Eyes of God.

His Arms embrace her and they print upon her His Own red Blood, she thrills at His touch, and answers love with love and wills to be pierced through and through with the pains of His passion. Whatever the weight of her cross, whatever the depth of her wounds, they are her joy for they liken her to her Love. The lover must be like her Love.

That is the mystical life in its essential reality, she has seen with the eyes of her soul Jesus, she has felt the inexpressible delight of contact with Him, and sees all things in Him: all that was obscure before, becomes clear in the light of that seeing. She loves and because she loves she sees with loving eyes what only love can see.

She is the lover and finds all she needs, all she desires in her love, and the fulness of joy in her transformation into Him.

CHAPTER IV

THE AWAKENING OF LOVE

Jesus Christ came down from Heaven, and took to Himself our human nature, to look for lovers and to kindle the fiery flame of supernatural love in the human soul.

There is nothing in nature quite so magnificent or quite so splendid as the glory of sunrise; the shafts of morning light reaching up and across the firmament of Heaven: then the sun begins to raise his globe of fire over the hills, and, almost before you can realise it, he is there, the great blazing orb of light flooding the earth with morning splendour and calling all nature to life.

And love in its first awakening is something like that, swift as the great golden globe rises in the Heavens, so swift is the awaking of love, nay, more, it is swifter even than that, it is more like the lightning in the speed of its coming.

What is love, and whence comes it? I speak of love in its highest manifestation, that love which the Divine Lover Himself has declared the highest in the natural order, for which one shall leave father, mother, home, everything, and the two thus loving shall be two in one flesh. There are other manifestations of love, and they likewise are wonderful, for love is both the mightiest power and the greatest wonder in the world.

None can resist its power, none resist its compelling force.

Now, love is this wonderful action set up between two hearts. You cannot either tell when it will be set up or between whom it will be set up. Here are two who have often met each other, spoken to each other, perhaps been in daily contact with each other, and yet they are no more to each other than the stones they walk over or the people who surround them.

And then in a flash comes love, and all the world is changed. Before, they both existed: now they live. For without love they were merely existing; but once they are touched and quickened by love they live.

We never say people glide into love, or walk into love. No, they simply fall into love, because this awakening of love is so astonishing in the swiftness of its coming. A moment before, and they were not in love; a moment after and they are in love; and the two states are as widely separated from each other as light from darkness.

Now, you cannot regulate love's coming; you can neither anticipate nor postpone it. Still more difficult is it to fasten on the cause of it. Indeed, love seems to the non-lover utterly unreasonable, and quite causeless; and it generally comes at the most inconvenient moment and in the most unforeseen way.

If the coming, then, is so beyond calculation, so also is it beyond all human skill to divine to whom it shall come.

Love sets up its action between the most unlikely persons; you would never expect that the particular two who actually fall in love would be those particular two.

Parents, guardians, friends, relations, cannot control love; they cannot decide the question as to when or to whom love shall come. All the most wisely-planned schemes and hopes of fond parents,

all the ambitions of friends are shattered in a moment when love comes in; the union that has been planned seems so admirable from every point of view; but it has been planned with the deciding factor left out; love's action can be neither ignored nor diverted.

And the two who have fallen in love! What can they tell you of it? What answer can they make to the questioning of interested friends and relatives? How explain what eludes all explanation? They can only say, there was a moment when they were not in love, and now they are; from being nothing to each other they have become everything. Those not in love may crowd round with their questionings, as they thronged round the blind man when Jesus had given him his sight. How did it happen? How did it come about? The answer can only be the same as his: One thing *I know*, once I was blind, and now I see; one thing I know, once I was not in love, I knew not what it was, but now I am in love and I know it. It is the living experience of love that counts. One minute's experience of love tells you more about it than volumes of learned disquisitions.

Of course to the non-lover the whole occurrence appears irrational; lovers appear as mere fanatics or lunatics.

Nothing can bring love and nothing can keep it away. Parents may threaten and say: "If he does not give her up—or she does not give him up—he or she shall be cut off with a penny." The only answer they make to that is: "I do not care if you do, but you will never separate us."

Love changes everything; the outlook on the world is changed, or rather the world seems to have ceased to be a real place at all: love has become the only reality.

That love has come in becomes manifest at once;

even the hard and selfish feel the touch of its magic, they become gracious and smiling, and you wonder why. The explanation is simple: love has come in; they walk in another world and the joy of their new possession flows out on all around them.

And yet there was just that moment of time when the great transition took place: before, they both knew the fact of each other's existence, but it was only a fact just like any other and made the same impression. Now they love; and love has made them the sole reality to each other.

Such is the awakening of natural love, and like St. Paul, "I speak a human thing because of your infirmity," for the awakening of *supernatural love* is just as startling, just as swift; and just because it is *supernatural*, far more wonderful and far more amazing.

Before the awakening of this love, Jesus is a great Name, but only a name. The soul does not doubt His existence, she knows all the facts of Faith, all about the Sacraments, Grace and the Church. She has said her prayers, because from childhood up she has been so instructed; religion comes in just like other things come in. God exists, Christ exists, the Church exists, the sacraments exist; but that is all.

And then, swifter than the lightning, in a way that none foresee, comes the Divine Lover, and the action of love is set up between the soul of the creature and Jesus the God-Man. In a single instant He has passed from being a great existence to being the one only great reality. He fills everything.

The whole world seems to the soul to have fallen back into a sort of indistinct haze, and the figure of her Lover fills all her vision. The world, before so tangible and real, has fallen away at the living touch of superantural love.

The soul has looked into the Eyes of God.

Before, she was a potential lover, as is every human soul, for there is in every human soul the capacity of becoming the Lover of Jesus. Every soul can pass from the state of the servant to that of the Lover.

And that is what has happened. Utterly unforeseen by the soul herself, there has flashed within her this wonderful thing—Divine Love. Before it, all human love is a thing of naught. The fiery embrace of this love overpowers and bears down everything that stands in its way. This is the touch of love in its supremest reach. Love is the divinest thing in human experience even in the natural order; but in the supernatural it is Divine.

Nothing can resist its power, for this love is omnipotent. It is a disturbing element suddenly thrust in with a disconcerting swiftness that staggers all beholders, like a 5.9 shell in a farmhouse, or the shock of a lightning flash.

If the awakening of natural love astonishes, it is nothing to the astonishment evoked by the awakening of supernatural love. To fall in love with a creature is in a way intelligible to the beholders, however unwelcome and however foolish and stupid the lovers may appear; but the falling in love with Jesus, that red Figure, so ghastly, so stark in the cruel reality of His Agony, to fall in love with Him seems simply madness. How can you understand such a thing? In love with Jesus, and a Jesus that demands everything with such a relentless insistence that it must be given? Of course that is not religion, it is mere fanaticism. The onlookers want a nice, tame, genteel religion that will offend no one: just give to God what society and good taste will sanction, and no more. But Jesus the Lover does not fit in with all the nicely-calculated less or more of the worldly pious; He comes with one tremendous shock that sets the soul

quivering with love and blazing with enthusiastic devotion. He has become everything.

Well, what can these non-lovers say? Of course they say that is not religion; religion is something nice and respectable, that pays its half-hour's devotion on Sundays if not too inconvenient; but this—this is pure insanity. "You know, I always noticed there was just a strange streak in her character, a want of balance, a something I could not quite account for; now it is quite clear, poor child, religion has turned her brain, she is just mad —quite mad." With smug reflections such as these does the sober and proper religious world smooth its ruffled feathers, so rudely disturbed by the sudden, unwarranted intrusion of the Divine Lover in its midst.

They try explanation after explanation to rid themselves of the awkward fact, and never feel quite satisfied, for they felt she was quite level-headed and sensible before, in spite of the strange streak in her character they now for the first time have called to mind; however, this mad infatuation with Jesus Christ, that has led her to sacrifice all her prospects must be forgotten—so the best thing is to forget she was ever in our set at all.

No, there is no explanation of this action of supernatural love on the soul that in the first moments of its awakening has produced such arresting results. Only this, there was a moment when Jesus was just a great Name to her and now He is the whole reality. He fills her whole heart, soul and life.

That wonderful moment has come, the world has side-slipped; and it does not even interest the soul any more—Jesus, her Divine Lover, so holds her, and she so holds to Him, that everything else has fallen back into the depth of unutterable insignificance.

When Jesus comes, how He comes who shall say? But He comes, the Divine Lover, and once the action of Love is set up, His very Name is music, its very sound sets the soul quivering with love. He is the Lover, and the world can never be the same any more to the soul that has been caught by His Love.

The rising of the sun is just a feeble figure of the soul's awakening to this Divine Love. Love has begun its splendid course and will not rest till the soul has come to the Mystic Marriage, and elevated into God has become Deified.

How wonderful it is to behold the souls who are quickened by this touch of love. How utterly unlooked for both the souls He makes choice of, and the place where He bestows this first awakening of love.

God's choice is not man's for He sees not as man sees. When Samuel was sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse King of Israel, and they passed before him, surely, he thought, as he looked at this one, so strong, so tall, so handsome, the Lord has chosen this—but not so, all pass, and he knows that the Lord has not chosen any of these; it is the young boy, so unimportant that they were not at the trouble even to send for him that the Lord had chosen. Immediately he appears, God says to Samuel: "This is he whom I have chosen."

So Divine Love falls on a mere child; she knows naught of the ways of the world, she is just at the end of her school days, and in a moment she is caught and held fast by His Love. He has chosen her before the world could touch her, and so filled her with the burning heat of His love that she leaves the world scarce perceiving she has left it, so thrilled is she by her Divine Lover.

Over and over again we are struck by the fact that God's choice is so surprising and so unex-

pected. Not many learned, not many mighty according to this world are called. How very few really brilliant people receive the Divine fire. How very few learned people are touched by this burning of love. Some, yes, some, just to show that the intellectual and learned can love, and when they do, love with redoubled fervour, and, like St. Paul, count all their painfully acquired wisdom and learning as naught in the light and heat of the love of Jesus burning strong within them.

How our St. Bridget of Sweden loved to get away to solitude, even as a little child, just to talk to Jesus and tell Him how she loved Him. Lovers long to be alone, and when Jesus and the soul are in love, solitude becomes a delight, for the Divine Lover has so gripped the heart that all the things that fascinated and held it before fail to stir even a passing interest.

Come, My Love, come away! Jesus is calling, His love is drawing so intensely that it overpowers everything, at times so overwhelms as to take power of thought and speech away. The language of love is supremely simple because the lovers realise well that no words can express what they experience. What can the soul say to Jesus except this, "Jesus, my Love, my Love, my Love"? And these words are repeated again and again not by the lips, but by the soul herself to her Jesus Who has come and possessed her. In an instant of time everything is changed and the new life begins.

He comes so swiftly that the soul only perceives His coming when He has come. A child passing a church steps in. Jesus is a Name to her, a great Name—but just a name. She kneels there only a few minutes, but the Divine Lover has transfixed her heart as she kneels. She comes out in love with Him. All her former interests—and she had many—all her former pleasures—and they were

much—have vanished from her life, as if they had never been. In that brief moment the child has fallen in love with Jesus.

He comes, this Lover, and marks down one and another. Some He pursues long years: they try to elude and escape Him, but He is ever drawing closer and at last they are caught, the fire of love holds them; others are such as have never committed one deliberate sin of their own. To such He speaks: "Child, come to My cloister, My garden is ready for you." What! she is only fifteen; she has made no trial of the world. What madness is this? say the non-lovers. But Jesus has set up love in her heart; she sees the world as in a vision, and says: "I never wished to look on it again," and the cloister door closes behind her, and she thrills with unearthly joy at its closing.

Another child is seated in a theatre watching a popular play, and Jesus comes there, and says, "Come," and she said, "I knew as I came out of the theatre that night I must be a Catholic."

One day St. Bridget said to Jesus: "Lord, why have You chosen me who am so worthless?" and Jesus made answer: "Sometimes I choose to drink from golden vessels, at other times out of silver vessels; now I choose to drink out of wooden vessels, so I have chosen you."

This awakening of love is what mystical Theologians know as the *passive prayer of Recollection*, it marks the beginning of the soul's triumphant march towards the final consummation—her marriage with God. As St. Antony of the Holy Spirit remarks: "The evidence and effect of this state of recollection is shewn by the gathering together within the soul of all her powers. She cleaves now to God alone, she counts all worldly things as loss. The things she once prized as most precious she now utterly abhors."

She is in love with her Jesus. He is to her the sum of all reality; all her old interests have passed away; she perceives in herself that she has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. "Old things have passed away and all things have become new."

The way of the Lover is only understood by love: to those who have not experienced love's power the words and acts of lovers seem forced and unreal, and if this is true in the natural order it is still more true in the supernatural where love works with far greater power and demands more complete and utter devotion.

The soul can only look and love, indeed, in these first days she is so overwhelmed that she feels mere words utterly incapable of expressing the love that is flooding her with the exhilarating joy of her new life. It is only the awakening, the opening out of the life of love, but it has a beauty and wonder all its own, because it marks the sharp line of cleavage between the old world and the new. Before she was existing in the spiritual world, and now she is living in it.

The Church of God could not exist if it were not for this fire of love always burning within her—a fire that never goes out. There are times in the life of the Church when lovers seem few; but there are and there always have been and there always will be, lovers, those who follow the Divine Lover wheresoever He goeth.

CHAPTER V

LOVE'S PROGRESSION

Love has awakened in the soul and she has made the answering response to Jesus her Divine Lover, for it was He Who made the first advance. This Lover draws the soul ever closer to Himself by the attracting power of His loving Presence. The soul has come to the consciousness of her loving and being loved; that is the joy of this supernatural relationship that has begun between Jesus and herself.

In the days of love's first awakening, in the conscious joy of it, some things have not been perceived. The soul has been so thrilled by her Divine Lover, her eyes have been so held by Him, that she has had no time to look at herself, or even to ask herself whether there is anything in her that can displease Him. In the natural order if love is to grow and increase, the two lovers must draw together to a unity of heart and will. Each must sacrifice what is displeasing to the other. In the first joy of awakened love this is scarcely realised, but as the wonder of those days of first love gives place to the deeper love that succeeds them, the lovers begin to perceive the things in themselves which hinder their unity, and offend their love. And at once they begin to sacrifice the persons, places and things to which they are attached, and so strongly attached that before love began to work they would never even dream of forsaking, but now they are

surrendered almost without effort, because the drawing power of love impels them to the sacrifice.

The lover does not regret the sacrifice; it is enough that his love does not like this thing or that person, for both to be abandoned. Those two who are in love are drawing to unity, and this drawing to unity is a constant call to sacrifice.

That is natural love moving onwards towards its consummation.

Now look at supernatural love and mark its difference. Here it is only the soul that can sacrifice and renounce, for the Divine Lover is always pleasing to the soul because He is infinite in His perfection; defects and imperfections are only in the soul.

If the drawing attracting power of natural love is so strong, what shall we say of this supernatural love? It speeds the soul along the way of sacrifice and surrender of everything for love. The heart in love with Jesus tends to become like His Divine Heart, for if love is to go forward it must draw to likeness, and ultimately to such likeness that the acts of one become the acts of the other.

At first sight the wonder of love's awakening appears so great that the soul feels she has already attained her end. But she soon sees this is not so, and the burning of love itself becomes the great element in her purgation.

The soul perceives with ever-growing distinctness how many things there are within her that are offensive and displeasing to her Love.

Love burns, and love does not stop to reason. The Divine Lover has come into the soul and her life henceforth must be His: she is for ever linked to Him.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness to the lovers of Jesus, just as their love is foolishness to the world.

This burning of the Divine Love in the hearts

conquers everything, thrusts everything aside, rides over everything, because nothing can resist this love. The soul begins to forget herself and to lose herself in her Lover. From being selfish and seeing everything from her own point of view, she now begins to behold everything from her Lover's point of view. All the pleasures and interests, all the manifold affairs that formerly absorbed her are given up and cast out by the compelling force of Divine Love.

The soul of the lover runs to perfection.

As Jesus begins to act upon the soul, as her eyes are opened more fully to the amazing wonder of His Love, as she apprehends more and more of His nature, even the most selfish soul becomes selfless, and the most self-seeking self-forsaking. The soul's one pleasure, her one joy, is to please her Love; she seeks not what will please herself but what will please Him; how wonderful is the love of Jesus, passing all the soul ever conceived as possible, because love makes sacrifice a joy, and pain a delight.

The great Apostle is ever insisting on the double participation of the soul that is joined by love to Jesus. She is the partaker of His suffering life; she shares His crucifixion; she bears always the dying of Jesus in herself that the life of Jesus may appear in her; she is to be the loving partaker with her Love of His anguish and torment on the Cross; and all this because He wills to make her also a partaker of His Divine Nature. He became partaker of our humanity that we might be partakers of His Divinity. Here below the soul can sacrifice and suffer for her Jesus, she can be united with Him in His wounds and dereliction, and this, after all, for the soul that has fallen in love with Jesus, is the joy of her life; she rejoices because she can suffer for her Love and share His pain.

The effects of being in love with Jesus begin to manifest themselves even exteriorly, for, as Jesus begins to live in the soul of His lover, so she begins to be the manifestation of Himself. A new and gentle graciousness appears in her dealings with others, she becomes considerate and thoughtful, kind and gentle in word and deed even if before she has been wanting in both. What has happened? Is she ill? No: but she is beginning to be well.

It is true the soul has been taken by an illness; it is the wound of love, and the most hardened soul becomes sweet and gentle when wounded with the Love of Jesus.

That is true, even from the first beginnings of love, when fear ceases to be the most potent factor and love begins to take its place.

So as this love increases it forms more and more distinctly the image of Jesus in the soul. The soul is now answering love with love; the love she receives from Jesus flows back to Jesus, and back from Jesus to her, and this inflow and outflow love is ever forming the soul more and more to the likeness of God Himself. Jesus is God, God is Love—Infinite Love, and the soul is becoming love in that love.

The most seemingly hopeless sinner with both feet almost in Hell, can become the most glorious saint—for in truth there is no such thing as a hopeless soul, since, however far gone in sin, as long as she remains on earth she is a potential lover and can become an actual one.

This burning of love is changing the soul, and its very burning is purgatory to her; for its first effects seem to make her worse than before Love had begun its work; it is not so really, but Love has shown her what she is, and she loathes the sight, because she sees now what she never saw before:

defects unseen to the soul who has not begun to love, are an agony to the lover.

So she has a painful anxiety, a dreadful fear that she is not pleasing to her Love, that He is offended with her, and that she can never become what she so eagerly desires to be, pleasing in all things to her Lover. Now the soul has begun to see, she is penetrated with one eager longing to avoid everything that may hurt her Love, and yet she feels at every turn she is wounding Him, and as love progresses so does this anxious pain progress with it. She loves with ever growing ardour, she impatiently longs for the moment of the final triumph when she shall be raised up into her Jesus by the glorious crown of her mystical marriage; and yet she sees that of herself she can do nothing: it is only her Love working in her Who can carry the work of love to perfection.

She is changing from day to day, and she is not to-day what she was yesterday, and to-morrow she will not be what she is to-day: love is burning away by its constant action all that can stay her onward course. More and more she seeks only the will of her Beloved, the will of her Jesus is hers, she crucifies her own preferences and desires and does it joyfully. Joy is the note of her life because the sacrifice she offers her Jesus is the Sacrifice of Love; and indeed she would be unhappy if she was not living in this spirit of sacrifice. "I live—not I, but Christ lives in me"—that is the language of the soul ever bearing a deeper significance as she approaches more nearly the last stage of her journey; she feels the arms of Jesus around her, drawing ever closer to Himself, she sees love increasing within her, she rests in it and is glad.

She is drawn by love, she sees that her own efforts can do nothing—that all the things that

displease her Divine Lover can never be got rid of, unless He Himself takes them away.

The whole activity of the soul in this state consists in her passivity.

To take a natural illustration: an operation is to be performed and there is no anæsthetic; there is the patient on the table, there is the surgeon and there is the knife, and the whole success of the operation depends on the passivity of the patient (and how great an activity is needed to become thus passive). That is a picture of what is happening to the soul. She in on the operating table, God is the Operator, and the knife is His Love. Love is a knife because it cuts. The soul knows her utter helplessness: without Him she can do nothing. It is through the living realisation by the soul that she can indeed do nothing, and that her whole activity is to be directed to keeping herself passive in the Divine Lover's Hands, that the success of the operation depends.

How constantly the soul is deceived here! True, she knows quite well she can do very little, but how slow she is to realise that here she can do nothing, absolutely nothing; and yet He has told her quite plainly, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

The more love burns, the more the consciousness of her inability to do anything is brought home to the soul, her utter incapacity to get rid of the things she knows hurt and displease her Lover.

The soul entering on this way of love begins to know something of the passivity of love, sees so clearly her own weakness that she is paralysed at beholding it; and yet love finds a joy in resting thus passive in the arms of Love, in the quiet confident assurance that Love will do everything if she does not resist.

The Divine Lover is very jealous, and will have everything, for love is always extreme, and He

presses its demands to the utmost limit. This Divine Lover *will have everything*, and nothing must remain in the soul that shall in any way oppose His designs towards her.

Jesus acts on the soul by transforming her into the express image of Himself, and this burning love by which the Divine fire transforms, pierces the soul with the most intense suffering; one thing after another is uprooted and cast out, and yet it is love and only love that inflicts the pain.

This purgation must go on until the work is complete, and the soul herself would not have it otherwise even if she could; for Jesus is the worker, and she knows that He is in love with her as she with Him, and that all her suffering will but perfect her love.

The very things in which the soul once found joy she now only finds bitterness. He takes from the very things that used to give her pleasure all their capacity to give it to her, that nothing may remain that can come between the soul and Himself.

The sensitive part of the soul must be utterly purged of every attraction and clinging to any created thing; and even after the wonder of Love's awakening there are moments when the senses are drawn away and fascinated by the beauty of natural things; but the soul cannot rest in them, if for a time she is thus drawn outwards, she only experiences pain instead of pleasure, for the burning of love is still there and will not suffer her to satisfy herself with them. Our Divine Lover sees our weakness and with His Own Hand removes the things on which we are tempted to rest. Everything that will hinder our progress in love He takes away, and as we look back on life over the waste of years, we see how wonderfully tender and compassionate He has been to us and how miserably we should have fallen if He Himself had not taken

away that which would have been to our loss. From a child of sixteen, when the light of His love first touched my soul, He has never allowed anything or anyone to remain in my life to which or to whom I might have become attached—He has taken all away. If someone or something came in He either turned the natural satisfaction to bitterness or removed it. He said: "No, you cannot have that, you cannot; your whole love must be kept for Me alone: you must find your full and entire satisfaction in My Love, I am sufficient for you." This action of love is to take away everything on which the eyes might rest, the ears hear or the senses perceive. Even things good in themselves He takes away and says: "I and I alone must be your Love and your All."

And as the burning of Love becomes stronger the soul loses her interest in outward things, turns within and realises the meaning of her Lover's words when He says to her: "The Kingdom of God is within you." Her own Jesus is living in her heart, and there within is His Kingdom, "Christ in her the hope of Glory."

The great delusion that so often afflicts the soul is to try and arrange the Kingdom of God around her, and so build up a little exterior kingdom, and of course it is always collapsing and the soul is always in a state of trouble and disquiet, until she turns to her Divine Lover within, and shuts out all the turmoil of exterior things.

The effects of this interior tranquillity have their exterior manifestation, for this Kingdom of God established within gradually subdues all things to itself. The Divine Lover is there, and so the soul, naturally impetuous and hasty, becomes calm and controlled; the soul that is naturally fiery and restless becomes restrained and still. It is the burning of love reaching out from within.

But there is also an interior transformation wrought by this Divine Lover. The *imagination* is brought to rest, and how great a work is this bringing of the imagination into captivity to Christ the soul perceives full well. The imagination left to itself works like a Cinema, and picture follows picture each more disturbing than the last. It is for ever painting future possibilities, the things that are coming, our own actions, the actions of others; sometimes it combines with the memory, and then the pictures begin to show all that would have been if at a particular moment in the past we had acted other than we have. All this darkens, bewilders and disturbs the soul, and hinders love having free course with her. How terribly the imagination can affect the soul only those know who have experienced it.

The *memory*, too, recalling with fearful vividness past events, makes them as if present, and crushes the soul with the record of past failures, excites her to anger or joy by the recollection of former happenings; and while the soul is thus torn by conflicting emotions, driving her alternately back to the past and forward to the future, she cannot attend to what she has to do in the living present. Jesus Himself must speak the word: "Be still," and there shall follow the great calm when both these faculties of the soul have been completely emptied of all images past or future.

Then the soul finds her *intellect* at work, apprehending, reasoning, judging events and people, passing judgment on all sorts of possibilities and happenings that may never arise, and even when they concern the actual events of the moment these judgments are mostly wrong and faulty, owing to the human element having so much play. Every thought must be brought into subjection to the Divine Lover. The activity of the intellect

must be stilled. This purgatory through which the soul is passing is Love working in her, and casting out everything that opposes her perfection.

Even when the senses and the powers of the soul are finally made subject to Grace it is only Love that can transform them in their manner of acting.

Every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth that it may bear more fruit, that is the way in which the soul is prepared by Jesus through long purgation for the great day of her Bridal.

All the natural habits of the soul have to be replaced by the supernatural. Wonderful in the order of Grace, terrible in the order of nature is this Purgation by the Divine Lover, for nature shrinks back from the action of love's knife as it cuts into the soul removing first one thing and then another, like the purging of the vine-branch.

The soul cannot keep anything for herself: if she fastens her affections on any object whatever He takes it away, it is gone, and she hears Him saying, I am you Lover—I will have everything, I will be everything to you, but you must be everything to Me. He will have the heart and all of it, it must be the whole. St. Ignatius realised very fully the essential fact that it must be everything, and that is why he dwells so much on this indifference to creatures in his spiritual exercises, and by creatures he means all that is not God, and insists how they are to be used or not used in so far as they help or hinder our participation in the life of God.

That the number of lovers who come to the Mystical Marriage is so small is not because only the few are called, but because even of those who have responded and begun to love, so many reach a point at which they will not surrender all, and it must be all: not one single thing however small

dare the soul keep for herself; that is to resist the work of the Divine Lover, and the soul so resisting cannot come to the Marriage because to come to the Marriage she must make the great renunciation —*she must give all.*

CHAPTER VI

DRIFTING APART

In the natural order you see two lovers devoted to each other, seemingly in every way admirably fitted the one for the other, and you have the confident assurance that here is the making of a happy marriage.

And then you see arising a coldness between them, scarcely perceptible at first, but becoming more marked as the days go by—their need of each other grows less, there is no longer the same joyful welcome at their meeting, the occasions of their coming together become fewer, the time spent together shorter, finally they drift apart, and become strangers to each other—and the marriage that seemed so assured never takes place.

The onlooker often sees what is happening, and sees what the issue will be, long before the two most concerned are conscious of it; for the decline of love is a slow process, quite unlike the lightning flash of its coming.

And the onlooker is powerless to do anything to avert what is inevitable, there is nothing to do here; those who look on cannot stay the coming of love, neither can they arrest its going

It is always a sorrowful sight to watch two lovers drifting apart, for the separation always begins over some mere trifle which one of the lovers will not sacrifice for the other, something really not worth keeping which yet drives a wedge of separation

between and finally forces the lovers so far apart that they never come together again.

Just as in the natural order there exists the possibility that the two lovers may drift apart and finally separate, so is it also in the supernatural order.

It is terribly true that the soul in love with the Divine Lover may drift apart from Him, and, after having experienced the all-surpassing joy of Divine Love, never come to her Mystical Marriage with the Son of God, but, instead, come to be finally separated from Him.

Supernatural Love so exceeds the highest earthly love that it appears utterly impossible that the soul, having once tasted the sweetness of this love, could ever fall away from it; yet it is a terrible possibility: even the Great Apostle says, "I beat down my body and bring it in subjection, lest after preaching to others I myself should become a castaway." It is no wonder that some have not been able to face this fearful fact; they cannot believe that the soul, once she has really fallen in love with Jesus, can ever separate from Him. All they can say is that the soul that thus falls away has never really been in love with Jesus, that the action of love that appeared to have been set up between Jesus and the soul was not real supernatural love at all. That is the heresy of Calvin, and a very understandable heresy, and yet none the less a heresy, for it denied one of the most terrible facts of the supernatural life, the dread possibility that a soul once in love with Jesus, and having experienced the wonder of His love, should yet grow cold in that love and finally break away from the Divine Lover altogether. It seems incredible, yet is true, dreadfully true, terribly piercing, as all real things are.

To the soul herself, rejoicing in the newly-awakened love, it seemed impossible that anything

in Earth, Heaven, or Hell should ever separate her from her Love.

The world had fallen away from her, she had answered love with love; she had thrilled at her Lover's Voice, and how could anything ever really come between her and Him, even to cast a passing cloud over their sweet communion.

And then something happened. The Divine Lover is a jealous Lover, and will possess her so utterly and entirely for Himself that none other shall claim any part in her. So He asked of her all; she had given much, and then one day He said to her, "You must give Me that"; it was not something great, only something very small, and the soul said, "No, not that; anything else, but not that; it is so small, what difference to our love can that make? I shall keep that."

And at first there seems little difference; love still works, and Jesus asks again, and again the soul refuses. A little shadow falls on love, a chill, the first herald of their drifting apart.

The soul does not herself perceive what is happening. She does not mark that little cloud, less than a man's hand, that has appeared in her Heaven; but the cloud grows ever bigger as the days pass, and the warmth of love feels the chill of that shadow.

Jesus is not quite what He was before; yet there is only that one thing, and that so small. But that one thing brings other things in its train, as the cloud in the Heavens is followed by others, and Jesus and His love become less and less to the soul. Yet the soul still thinks the marriage will take place, in spite of all that is happening, in spite of the cooling of her love of which she can no longer be unconscious; yes, the marriage will be delayed, but not abandoned—no, only delayed.

The days pass, the soul no longer looks forward

with eager longing to the marriage. Other interests have almost unperceived crowded into her life, and the marriage with the Son of God recedes into a future that ever grows more distant.

Then Love grows cold: her interests and those of her Divine Lover become more and more separated; her love of Him becomes overshadowed, and finally there comes the moment of separation—Jesus and the soul have parted—it is the beginning of a separation that shall be eternal.

There is nothing quite so sad for the spiritual director as to behold this drifting away of the soul from Jesus—he sees it, he sees with a clearness begotten of bitter experience what is coming, and does what he can to save the soul from final shipwreck, yet all the while with a piercing pain at the heart that assures him all his efforts will be in vain.

Now, we must be quite clear as to the cause of this separation between the soul and the Divine Lover. It is not the defects and faults of the soul, not the imperfections, all of which when she is in love give her a piercing pain, because she sees in the burning of love how they grieve her Jesus. No, the soul may stumble and fall and rise again, and love may grow in spite of the falls. Jesus spoke to Juliana of Norwich in those wonderful revelations of His Love, and said to her: "I am not angry when one who loves Me falls down in the mud, for I say he has fallen in trying to do Me a service, so I go to lift him up."

The soul in love with Jesus may fall, but if immediately she falls she turns to her Divine Lover and says, "O, Jesus, I am sorry!" His Own loving hands will reach down to her and lift her up. No, it is not through these falls, although they may come very often, that Jesus and the soul drift apart.

The separation has its beginning in the refusal persisted in to give up something very small to

Jesus. He demands everything, the soul responds, "Yes, Lord, everything, but not this small thing which is surely so small that it cannot interfere with our love." There is the beginning of that separation which is eternal. It is in the persistent refusal to give this small thing that the soul inflicts the terrible evil of separation on herself. He, her Lover, asks again, and again, and again, and always meets with the same refusal. It is as if a strange blindness had fallen on the soul, so that she cannot see what she is doing; her director strives to open her eyes to the danger, tries to make clear to her that if she persists the end will be separation, but she will not believe it. Sometimes he receives an answer which appears as if at last the soul had seen, a little later, and a chance remark shows all too clearly she is still as blind as ever.

The supernatural world is dreadfully real; there is life and there is death; there is Heaven and there is Hell; there is the Eternal Marriage with God, and there is the Eternal separation from God.

The soul of the lover must be a generous giver, she must give everything wholly and utterly without any reserve of any kind whatsoever; nothing must be held back, nothing, however small. Soeur Thérèse understood this well, and it is the great wonder of her life. For she could say at the last: "God will refuse me nothing in Heaven, because I have refused Him nothing on Earth."

It is the reason I have always insisted so strongly on this giving of everything, for Jesus the Divine Lover Himself calls His Bride to the Wedding, and she must bring everything to her Lover and refuse Him nothing that He asks. The thing refused may be small, but it is the beginning of a drifting apart of the lovers. Love cannot pursue its triumphant way if one single thing be retained by the soul, no matter what it be.

That refusal to give will destroy the love-life, it will lead the soul to cleave to one thing after another, till she loses her love of Jesus altogether.

That is the explanation of the mystery with which we are met again and again in the supernatural life. We see a soul pressing onwards in love, and we say there is a soul that will go far: she will surely come to the marriage; and she does go far, and then you see there is a decline in the burning of her love. You hope it is only something passing: there is an occasional revival, but each time the fire dies down there is less than before; until the end, when you see that soul has lost the burning of love altogether.

One thing has impressed me much as I have gone about: and it is this. I have never seen a soul hold back something from Jesus in this way and not go steadily from bad to worse. I have seen them perhaps at the interval of a few years, and each time they are farther and farther away from love. Rarely, if ever, have I seen a real recovery. No; this persistent clinging to some person or thing, or to their own will, has destroyed the supernatural life that promised so fair, and gave assured hope of so much glory to God. As you beheld the soul in her first love you felt confident that here was one who would really give God everything and haste to the marriage. And then came the shadow—the wedding was postponed; then came separation, and the separation eternal, because the Marriage is eternal.

But not all souls who stop short in their love go back like this to eternal separation; they reach a degree of love beyond which they never progress in this life; only through long purgation hereafter do they come to the Marriage with the Son of God, that might have been theirs in this world had they been generous enough to sacrifice everything and

throw themselves with utter "abandon" into the arms of Infinite Love.

But stopping short in the mystical path is always terribly perilous, and therefore I have insisted on the fearful possibility of final separation resulting from it. Yet many souls who experience the joy and wonder of love's awakening, and go far along the way of love, stop short just at the very moment when they are within reach of that life of union by love, which makes a very Heaven of Earth. Alas! that it should be so; but it is only too often the sorrowful experience of directors; those they have been helping along the Way of Love stop short at that point in their spiritual experience when God is calling them to unity, and they hold back because they will not abandon themselves utterly to the good pleasure of the Divine Lover.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAY OF LOVE

Love is not only the great reality, it is also the great mystery, even in the natural order; in its beginning, in its course, in its effects. Love is always doing the most astonishing and disconcerting things, it never follows the course expected, none can forecast the effects it will produce, it can never be restricted within the narrow bounds of social convention. Love will be free, it cannot be restrained, it finds ways to express itself that are a continual surprise to those who, never having experienced its power, cannot understand its mode of action. Love in all its operations is always shrouded in mystery.

But if merely natural love is so great a mystery, supernatural love is a greater mystery still.

The manner of its coming is so swift and so secret, so utterly unexpected; why it should suddenly burst into flame in that particular soul, why she should be caught in its fiery embrace, what there is in her that the Divine Lover should thus give her His Love. All this is a mystery, not only to the onlooker, but even to the soul herself; she can only say: "Once I was blind but now I see." And the course of this love—how the soul will be affected by it, what the change produced in her, with what speed she will come to the Marriage—all this is hidden, too. No one may forecast the future of a soul in love with God. If the manifestations of natural love disturb the respectable conven-

tionality of the social world, much more does the manifestation of supernatural love disturb the sober respectability of the religious world.

The lovers of Jesus are not merely a perpetual source of wonder to it, but also a perpetual annoyance : the extravagance and the fanaticism of these lovers bring religion into disrepute, for love has something in it so strong and so terrible that it never can be anything but a disturbance in a world where it is so unwanted.

True, our sober religious world will just tolerate the extravagances of the Lovers, provided they occur in a sufficiently distant past; for then they are sufficiently remote from the actuality of to-day, and their undesirable characteristics can be explained away as the peculiar manifestation of an almost prehistoric asceticism, and so need not disturb its self-satisfied complacency. But when the Lovers are so unreasonable as to appear next door, and in these days reproduce all the dreadful penances and charnel-house horrors of the past, well, it is not to be tolerated, and the publication of such unpleasant facts ought to be stopped.

Supernatural love can neither be restrained nor restricted, nor regulated, however desirable that may be in the interests of religious respectability. This love knows no limit; the soul of the lover burning towards the Divine Lover, pays no heed and has no eyes for aught but Him, never stays to consider what may be thought of love's manifestation, but manifests love because it cannot do otherwise.

The soul, thrilling with the intoxicating joy of her first awakening, can think of nothing but her Jesus Who is ever with her and before her : as her love grows her desires grow, because she wills to be like her Love, and nothing save perfect likeness and oneness with Him can satisfy her.

Now, in the light of the experience of God's lovers we can obtain a general idea both of the course of this love and the way in which the Divine Lover perfects the soul and fits her for her marriage with Himself, and although the experience of no two souls can be exactly alike, yet in broad outline at least, and in like circumstances and conditions, we may expect to see like results; to those who have studied the lives of the saints this fact indeed stands out very clearly, and we find the same conditions producing like results, although in far different ages and different lands.

Mystical Theology, comparing soul experience with soul experience, sets forth the different states through which the soul must pass from her first awakening to love until by her mystical marriage she attains the consummation of all her love desires.

We need, then, to get as complete a view as possible of these operations of love in their relation to each other, and to mark the difference between the various degrees of contemplation, and especially to distinguish between those states which are habitual or permanent and the passing graces of prayer that accompany them.

There are then states which we may call habitual or permanent.

I. These permanent states are (1) that of recollection; (2) of Quiet; (3) of simple union, and finally (4) mystical marriage.

II. There are also passing states of contemplation of brief duration, which may recur with more or less frequency: these are (1) the prayer of silence; (2) Intoxication of Divine Love: (3) mystical sleep; (4) agony of Divine Love; (5) ecstacy, and (6) rapture.

There are also accidental graces which

sometimes are given to particular souls, but are not essential to mystical contemplation: these are (1) voices; (2) visions, (3) revelations; but these are accidental to, and by no means a necessary part of the life of the lover of Jesus.

III. There are the passive purifications of sense and spirit that accompany the soul in her ascent to God and cease when she has become finally united to the Divine Lover by the mystical marriage, as the work of these purifications is simply to make her ready for that day.

The table following will give a clear idea of the relation of these various experiences to each other.

Permanent States.	*Passing States.*	*Purifications.*
1. Recollection	1. Silence 2. Intoxication of Love	1. Passive purification of sense
2. Quiet	3. Mystical Sleep 4. Agony of Love	2. Passive purification of spirit
3. Union	5. Ecstasy 6. Rapture	
4. Mystical Marriage		

This way of Love is a way in which joy and suffering are strangely mingled; at the same moment that the soul is thrilling with the burning joy of love, she is also experiencing the most piercing pain through that very same burning. She tastes the joy of love and the joy of suffering at the same time, and however intense the suffering be—and the pains of these passive purifications are always terrible—yet this agony does not disturb her peace and joy, indeed they are the means of increasing it, for every stage in the progress of her purification brings her nearer to the fulfilment of her one desire, her perfect union with her Lover.

But there is always a danger of souls being misled by a mere superficial acquaintance with this life of love, and knowing the mere terms of it without having any experience of its reality; and of all things the mere external knowledge of the spiritual life is the most loathsome and the most dangerous. I remember the glib way in which one said to me once: "I have got as far as locutions," in a manner that clearly showed the absence of all realization of the real meaning of the term.

The life of Love is the supreme reality, and the test of reality is the persistent, constant and tireless mortification and crucifixion of the whole nature, within and without; where this is wanting there is no real love: emotion, and even passion there may be, but not love. Love is terribly real and works a real change in the soul, and it is by its effects that true love is known.

When a soul, supposed to be advanced in supernatural ways, will not endure the least contradiction and is offended at mere trifles, it is self-evident that there is nothing supernatural there; that, although there may be some passing passion or emotion, that soul possesses nothing of supernatural love, for love cannot be present in the soul and the soul not become changed by its presence.

Of course in the earlier stages of this love there are failures and there are weaknesses, but there is a deep profound humility, and a burning hatred of self, that grows and grows, until every thought and word and movement is brought into subjection to the Will of the Divine Lover.

The soul in her first awakening, indeed, is so overwhelmed by her new love that for the time she does not even look at herself, but soon she is made aware of the law of sin working in her members, like the Apostle, she sees and loathes herself and hates herself, and this loathing springs from the

burning of love: her greatest agony comes from her failure to be all that she knows her Lover wills her to be. She never for an instant spares herself; it is this that so shocks the merely pious, the fierce, savage way in which the lover treats her body; especially is this a rock of offence in our soft, self-indulgent age, when the body is pampered and indulged as never before.

St. Rose of Lima, innocent child though she was, understood this, and was unsparing in the mortification of her body. And of this we may be very sure, where this unmerciful crucifixion of the body and the senses is absent there is no real love. Look at this child, burning with love, as she forms her crown of silver, with its three rows of sharp points of thirty-three each, which she wore always under her veil, so arranged that the least motion of her head tore her flesh. Her bed was a chest of rough wood, in which she set a number of stones of various sizes, filling in the spaces with three hundred pieces of broken tiles, so placed as always to wound her body. For fifteen years she slept on this rough bed. Yet her body was intensely sensitive to the least pain, and she never lay down on it without shuddering and trembling, such was the resistance her sensitive body offered to the pain. She refused her body any comfort; her fasts were terrifying: she made a moderate-sized loaf and a pitcher of water last fifty days, often in that intensely hot climate passed whole days without a drop of water to cool her parched tongue. Her discipline was made of ten iron chains, and her blood sprinkled the walls and made a stream in the middle of her cell. Such was this valiant tamer of the flesh. Yet she was not sad, but always smiling and radiant. She crushed down nature in every way because she blazed with love to her Jesus.

Father William Doyle, who fell in the great

struggle for Passchendaele, is another example of what this burning love of Jesus can do in the soul; his austerities, ever increasing in number, grew with the growth of the love of Jesus. His terrible disciplines, his bed of nettles, his nightly standing in the water, his vigils and continual mortification of his whole nature, are the manifestations of his Love; yet, like all the lovers of Jesus, he was always joyous and smiling, so that none by his outward manner could form any idea of the ruthless penance of his hidden life.

This unsparing self-conquest, this self-annihilation, is the sure evidence of real love; all else may well be suspect; but a rigorous merciless taming of the flesh and spirit; a joyful spirit and entire self-forgetfulness, these are true signs of love's presence, and cannot mislead.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SILENCE OF LOVE

God is Light, and God is Love. His Love and His Light are inseparable.

Without light we cannot see, without seeing we cannot know, without knowing we cannot love.

That is true both naturally and supernaturally.

Now, Faith is the Light through which we see God, and, seeing God, love Him. The Light of Faith shows Jesus the God-Man and shows all the wonder of His Love. And the soul perceives this Light shining upon her is also a burning heat, and this heat is Love. How swift and how sudden is this blazing-up of love we have seen already: a moment before and God existed and the Faith existed, but yet the soul had not seen; then, in a moment, she sees, and, seeing, loves. The seeing and loving both come together, and henceforth a wonderful action has been set up between these two, God and His creature.

Look at the two who have fallen in love in the natural order. Before, they were occupied with a thousand interests: the fact of each other's existence was like any other fact that fell under their observation. And then came at the same instant that wonderful seeing and that wonderful loving. How was it they had not seen and loved before? How was it their eyes had not been opened before? They cannot tell you that: but love's eyes are opened now, and they are open only for each other. All other things have suddenly shrunk into

an insignificant nothingness. They only see with loving glance each other; all outward things have fallen into a scarcely perceived background. That is the first awakening of natural love.

And supernatural love has arisen in the same way. Jesus, with the great red wounds and thorn-crowned head, existed before, but He was just one fact amidst a crowd of others, and not the most arresting; then, in a moment, came that wonderful seeing and that wonderful loving. The eyes flame and the heart thrills. Jesus, and He only, is the great reality; all else falls into oblivion.

That is why Mystical Theology names this wonderful awakening of love the *prayer of recollection.* St. Antony of the Holy Spirit, and Vallgornera, describe it in almost the same words: "*Secessus quo anima cum omnibus suis viribus ad interiora recipitur et ab exterioribus elongatur.*" A withdrawal by which the soul gathers all its powers within and outward things are placed afar off.

That is exactly what happens: the soul has no eyes for anything outside; everything but her Jesus is pushed back into an indistinct background, and He, living within her and filling her with Light and Love, takes the place they have vacated. All the soul's powers are concentrated within upon Him. Her new life has begun. Everything has shifted; previously her life was without, her interests without; now they are all within. She has seen, and, seeing, loved. Her whole outlook on life is changed, her whole world is changed, for Jesus is her world now, old things have passed away, all things have become new. There are times of wonderful joy when she is so caught by this burning love within that she forgets for the while all else, and these moments of intense love come upon her without effort on her part. Vallgornera says: "The Lord has a way of quite suddenly calling through

His holy inspiration the intellect, affections, and thoughts, without any effort on the soul's part, gathering them together within her and setting her before that table of Light and Love at which she is abundantly refreshed." And St. Antony of the Holy Spirit says: "Although this interior gathering together is perceived with much sweetness, yet how it happens is not easily conceived." There is Jesus, and the soul, and she is flooded with the joy and delight of His presence in these moments of overpowering sweetness. In the Light she grows in the knowledge of His Love, and she feasts at this table of delights which her Jesus spreads before her.

That two are in love is seen by its effects: before they were nothing to each other, now they are everything. They get away as much as they can from things that disturb their communion together; they eagerly look for the times when they can be with each other, and put everything on one side as far as they can to prolong those moments.

That Jesus and the soul are in love is seen by its effects, too. The soul has an ever-growing distaste for the things of the world, and as far as she can she gives up everything of the sort, except the duties her state demands of her; she eagerly seizes on all the time she can, to spend it in long communion with her Lover. She is so absorbed that sometimes a certain absent-mindedness shows itself in her relations with the outside world, such as is shown by lovers in the natural order. For the two experiences, natural and supernatural, are very like in their manifestations.

But whether speaking to her Jesus in these moments of more intense communion or not, never for a moment is He absent from her thoughts—He has taken the place of everything that interested her before. And these moments of meeting with Jesus in the depths of her soul grow more frequent as love

burns more strongly within her. He is never absent, but it is rather that in these moments all outward things have vanished and do not come in even remotely to disturb her joy.

Lovers are often silent, just looking and loving. They say nothing, and yet the silence is more eloquent than many words, because their very silence speaks. It is just that love has so overwhelmed them—they are so in love with each other, and so full of the joy of it—that their lips cannot frame what they would say; they know it and are still.

That is the silence of natural love. There is also a silence of supernatural love: the soul is so flooded with the joy of looking at her Jesus, she is so overwhelmed at the thought that He loves, that her whole soul is hushed to silence; she can only look and love. She is held by her Lover, and her voiceless adoration is the highest expression of her love. She rests in the joy of being loved, feels her utter helplessness to tell all that wells up within her to her Lover, and so she remains and looks with wide-open eyes at Jesus her Lover, and even her helplessness makes her glad. No disturbing pictures thrust themselves upon her through the imagination; her understanding ceases to reason, she neither thinks nor speaks. Even her will is still resting with a wonderful content in the arms of love. Even the senses are at peace. This experience is called the *Prayer of Silence.* Cardinal Vives y Tutos, speaking of this state, says: "It is that prayer by which the soul from the greatness of the Light, and the fervour of love and devotion, is, as it were, stricken in all her powers, in a state of great wonder, abides in God. Whence it implies Divine Light and burning love. The imagination becomes as if stupefied; the intellect, held in wonder by the great things of God, becomes still; the will, placed

in the ardours of Divine Love, rests peacefully. Hence this prayer is well named the delightful silence."

Alvarez de Paz, speaking of this same experience, says: "The soul becomes silent through the increase of light and love, the desires cease, and she passes to a certain suspension of the understanding, and, uplifted to the most burning love, her interior voice is stilled. Then the understanding, because of the admiration of the truth and beauty which it sees, becomes silent, neither can it reason or argue or even speak. Then the imagination is so stricken and bound by God that it is still and dares not to wander. . . . The whole man is silent, the senses do not disturb, the desires cease, and the intellect and the affections remain perfectly quiet." Vallgornera adds: "Yet in this silence the contemplative soul is not wanting in Divine praises. . . . For the highest praise is, through admiration at the greatness of what is seen, to be silent"; while St. Thomas says: "The cause of this silence is the greatness of the light . . . the greatness of the love, and the fire of devotion."

Like lovers, in the natural order, who are beholding each other with the silent admiration of love, the soul in this silence does not lose the consciousness of her surroundings, although heedless of what is passing around her. She is held fast in this wonderful glance of love with such an absorption of all her powers that she only sees her Lover. The longer she looks the more she is overwhelmed by this Light and Love, to such an extent that all powers of expression seem taken from her—she can only lay her voiceless adoration at the feet of Infinite Love. These wonderful silences are never of long duration, for the soul could not long bear such light and such burning of love and yet live. But often after her first awakening she experiences

a return of these wonderful moments all through the days of her state of recollection, and also through the succeeding state of Quiet.

When these visitations are passed they leave the soul more detached from all earthly things and with an ever-growing desire that her days may be shortened and that she may speedily come to the Marriage; contempt of self becomes ever greater and greater; and the desire of being formed to the image of her Love increases to such an extent as to become her greatest pain and torment.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEPARATING POWER OF LOVE

Love is an extraordinary paradox; it unites to the very extent that it divides. The Divine Lover has said: "I have not come to send peace on earth, but a sword." The sword separates, divides, severs; the sword is love, and love separates, divides, and severs in the proportion that it conjoins, unites, and unifies. Yes: love that is so alluring, so attracting, so compelling that it draws with irresistible force to unity, in the very act of making that unity, with a like power separates and divides.

The Catholic religion has in its very nature something fierce and untamable—it never can be a nice tame religion that will offend nobody. It is fierce and untamable because it is Love, and love always has something of fierceness in its very nature.

Behold a family united together in the strong bonds of love, not merely natural love, but natural love supernaturalized. Father and mother loving each other with a wonderful devotion, and loving their children with a like devotion, too. The children loving each other, and loving father and mother with a love that is wonderful in its reality and intensity. How wonderful to see that whole family grouped around the Altar—father, mother, the two girls, the boy—rapt in love to Jesus and each other. Behold them, as together they receive Jesus their Love and their Lord. It is moving and heart-piercing, because you know the spell of that incomparable unity will surely be broken.

As yet no passing cloud or shadow has fallen to

mar the completeness of their joy: they live for each other and want no other outside the charmed circle of their peaceful, happy home.

But the father and the mother know, and dread and fear, for they know a lover will come to those children from outside the circle, and then that circle will never be the same again.

And that loving father and mother dread and fear, for of what sort shall that lover be? If they might have their way they would that the Divine Lover might come and take each one to His embrace: they would with joy and thanksgiving consecrate all their children to the service of the Jesus they love. But they know not what shall be, and they are frightened lest it be only an earthly lover who shall come. The spell will most surely be broken—and the very love that shall unite shall also separate. There shall come that moment when the stranger from outside shall come and the hearts of these two blaze with the fire of that greater Love, for which, as the Divine Lover has said, one shall leave father, mother, home, all. May that lover be none other than the Divine Lover Himself. May He come with His Divine attraction and flame the hearts of these children to Him. But whether it be He, or a merely earthly lover, the sword of separation must surely come and the sweet peace of that wonderful group be rent by the sword—and the sword, Love! That is the character of love, whether natural or supernatural; a band to unite, a sword to sever.

Yes: supernatural love, too, is both band and sword, and it is band and sword to an extent overpassing all the strength of merely natural love. The very love that has by the fascination of its resistless attraction drawn the soul, in whom its flames have been kindled towards the Divine Lover, draws away and divides her from home, and all she

has loved and held dear before, to the very extent that it has drawn her to Him. The Divine Lover says to her: "If you are to be Mine, and I am to be yours, you must leave everything else, for I and I alone shall be your everything. Yes: if you will make answer to My calling, if you will say *Venio* to My *Veni*, then it must be absolute detachment, entire separation from all you have sought, or hoped, or known; then separated by the Sword of My Love you shall be united to Me in the Bands of My Love, and you shall have a hundredfold in the thrilling joy of love here and the Eternal embrace of My Love hereafter."

Yes: the sword pierces, pierces so cruelly, cuts so unmercifully that the soul feels she must die; but she does not die, for she is really only beginning to live. She dies that she may live, for without this separation, which is like death, there can be no union.

And this dividing and uniting, the twofold operation of love, must go on until the soul shall come to the Mystic Marriage: the sword will then be sheathed and only the band of love remain, for then the sword's work shall be complete, and the band will bind with a perfect binding the soul to the Divine Lover.

The soul is dying daily, she is in the act of dying, but not dead; she is not slain, but being slain all the day long. She cries, "I die daily, and daily dying grieve that I am not dead."

The sword of the Divine Lover is ceaselessly at work, cutting here and separating there; but it is always the sword—not peace, but a sword. The soul is dying all to-day and to-morrow and ever onwards till that last day of all, when wholly dead, she wholly lives, and her wedding day comes with its exultant joy and triumphant love. Until that day the sword is ever separating, and as separation

after separation comes, the band draws closer and closer around lover and Loved, till at last they cease to be two, and ceasing to be two become one.

Every separation, every crucifixion the soul endures is her preparation for a greater separation and a greater crucifixion yet to be. "Unless you leave *all*"—and the soul thinks at last she has left all: but no—the next day dawns and there is yet more to be sacrificed, more to be left. It is like the heights of Passchendaele: "When you get to the top of that ridge you are there." But every ridge you mounted only showed you another rising beyond it. So it is with the lover: every ridge she mounts, every sacrifice she makes, only brings to her vision fresh sacrifices yet to be made.

The Catholic Church, because so utterly supernatural, cannot escape being terrible: it makes demands no other religion makes or dares to make; for it is the religion of love, and nothing but love, and because it is that, it dares call for a sacrifice from its children such as none other dare. For this Church exists only to make souls the lovers of Jesus, and to be the lovers of Jesus they must die, and by dying come to the deathless life in Him. It is a separating religion: it divides and separates as no other religion divides and separates. Her children are separated, called apart from the world around them: they live in it, but are not of it; they speak not its language, nor live its life. No: their life is a separated life, because theirs is a separating religion, and it is a separating religion because it is the religion for lovers, and love must separate to the extent that it unites.

When, a few years ago, the call for King and country came, and boys in response to that call tore themselves away from the arms of mothers and sisters and lovers and crossed the seas never to return, that, too, was the call to separation: those

who loved their country much sprang forward to the sacrifice, maybe with breaking hearts, leaving all behind them. But the higher call had come, and they must go. It was the great separation, and their separation was as great and no greater than their love.

And the call of Jesus the Divine Lover is like that. He calls to sacrifice and to battle, and that call means a sword separating the soul from all she loves in the natural order. It is always the call to more and more sacrifice.

The Catholic religion is so astonishingly imperious in its call to sacrifice, because so astonishingly real in itself. She says: You are in love with the Heavenly Lover; Jesus Christ has captivated your heart; and this Lover with Whom you have fallen in love is like no earthly lover: the earthly lover may change, disappoint, fail; but this Lover will never change, never disappoint, and never fail. But if you are not to fail Him, you must give Him everything. You can hold nothing back. Your life henceforth will be one of ceaseless giving, unending separation; each day will call for new sacrifice; each new light of His love shining on you will show you new ways in which you must sacrifice if you are not to disappoint Him. But this Lover will never weary of you: He will lift you up when you fall, and for any sacrifice you make, give you a greater joy.

The separation will one day be complete, and so then will be the union. What you sacrifice is little in comparison with what you gain. So little for so much. For what are the things the sword cuts away compared with what the band gives?

The band unites you to Jesus Christ the Eternal Word; the band makes you His lover and will make you His bride, and bring you to such an extraordinary union that you will become Divine.

What, then, is what you leave? As little as the fishing boats the Apostles forsook to follow the Divine Lover when He was on earth—perhaps even less. And hear what He says: You shall here and now have the hundredfold of My all-surpassing love, that even here below shall make you so overwhelmed with joy that you shall seem already to be in Heaven.

Jesus the Divine Lover has come down on earth only to look for those who will be His lovers: those who will make the great sacrifice. Let Him do what He pleases with them. Let the sword divide and separate them from everything to which in any wise they may cling, and let His Band unite them in an everlasting unity with Himself. He has come to look for the soul that will love Him, and He will love her and make her His bride.

He calls the only child to leave the home where she is dearly loved, and give Him all in the cloister, where, hidden and unknown, she shall pour out her heart's love to Him. It is the sword and it separates; it is the band and it unites. He is the Lover Who has come into the home and snatched away that soul and made the centre of her love no longer to be there, but in Him. Love divides, it separates. It is always separating. It means at times such sacrifice as is beyond the power of human nature to give, and indeed it is, without the supernatural power of Eternal Love. But that drawing of Love overwhelms, bears down, and sweeps away all in its irresistible path.

The Divine Lover comes, the soul hears "*Veni.*" She sees what that *veni* means, it is to be such a leaving and such a dying; when she has made the great renunciation and answered to His call, when she has answered her *Venio*, how many fresh forsakings, how many fresh severings, ere she comes to the Day of her Marriage with the Word. To the

soul of the non-lover this renunciation, this daily dying, this continuous crucifixion seem so unutterably cruel and inexpressibly extravagant that she turns from it all in unmixed horror. The lovers who tread that way are mad. The Catholic religion cannot be like that: it must be so much more gentle, so much softer, so much more human than that. These lovers must be mistaken: the madness of love must have turned their heads, for they seem so inhuman, so heartless in the mad infatuation with the Blood-stained Figure of Calvary. How can they be so heartless? It is not religion, this ruthless uprooting of everything that makes life anything at all.

But these lovers have understood: they are not beside themselves. For the loss of everything here below they have gained the changeless love of the Eternal God.

Jesus has taken the soul for His Lover, and all, all His Love is hers. She has made a good exchange. And on the ears of the non-lover, beholding with horror-stricken eyes the strange stark figure these lovers follow, there fall the words: "I am not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword, to set son against father, daughter against mother . . ."

CHAPTER X

EXTERIOR PURGATION

When the soul falls in love with Jesus she is only at the very outset of her life of love; before she can become His bride she must be perfectly purified from aught that may hinder the perfection of that union.

She needs a perfect renovation and renewal within and without; this she only attains through the successive purgations, of exterior, of sense and of spirit.

No advance is possible in the life of love without exterior mortification; let no one for a moment imagine that leaving all the exterior in disorder, the passions to rove as they will, the soul can yet be interiorly mortified: this is utter folly.

The life of love can never be lived that way: it will be only a pitiful farce, and a farce that can only end in tragedy.

The very first burning of love causes the soul to perceive with painful clearness this truth. She perceives all too clearly that the impetuous acts and unrestrained movements of her as yet unmortified nature pierce and grieve Him with Whom she is in love. She sees her want of restraint in word: how often the word is spoken without reflection. She is so impetuous, she eagerly breaks in on the conversation, and she has wounded her Love by her words almost before she realizes she has spoken. Her impetuosity and readiness to speak must be crucified, her tongue bridled, be the struggle what it may in order to attain it.

She hears words that wound and annoy her, and before she realizes, she has answered sharp words with sharp words; angry passion has surged up within her, and when she comes to herself afterwards she conceives nothing but wretchedness and disgust at herself for her folly.

The more sensitive the nature the more easily it is irritated by trifling things, and the greater the triumph when it is conquered. Little Sister Teresa with her highly strung sensitive nature suffered agonies from the jangling of a rosary—and how irritating that can be those who have experience know—and of course she felt in herself: "Why ever cannot that Sister hold her rosary properly?" Something so very small: but it must be conquered, and she was resolved to conquer. Then the jangling rosary changed to sweetest music which she offered a love-gift to her love.

The artistic temperament, so sensitive to colour and form, how much it suffers in our churches: how often the architecture and the adornment seem created for the sole purpose of mortifying the artistic sense of the worshipper. The soul strives to concentrate on the sermon—a moment, and she says: "Look at those columns, how utterly wanting in proportion, how could anyone have perpetrated such an outrage—but it is the sermon—what is he saying—then look at that Altar piece, its garish colour, its appalling figures—but again it is the sermon, what says the preacher—and then that statue, how dreadful its form, how impossible the colouring—and the stained glass, what drawing, what juxtaposition of colour, how can they: 'How dreadful is this place!' But," says the soul, "I must conquer, it is agony, but I must conquer, I must become heedless to form and colour or they will conquer me, and never for an instant shall I know what peace is." And with strong resolution

she sets herself at the task, and by resolute purgation brings her senses into subjection to the spirit, so that the most ghastly interior and the most repellent ornament affect her not at all, or rather she no longer perceives what is there. Her sense is subject to her spirit.

But the soul sees clearly enough that she can only be at peace by the total crucifixion of her artistic sense. She knows the artistic horrors that fill the churches are all but inconceivable; that enter where you may, candlesticks like gas pipes, saints looking like nothing in earth or in Heaven. decoration that has been applied at so much an acre, colours that scream at you in their horrible crudeness: all these await her anywhere she may go, and more. Strangely enough, everything connected with religion seems to be ugly: paintings, frescoes, statues, all seem expressly designed to be a perpetual mortification to the beholder. But this high-strung, sensitive nature, so quick and so emotional, must be crucified utterly, brought into perfect subjection to the spirit. These artistic feelings will draw the soul away unless they are brought to their death by crucifixion.

"When we see Him we shall see no beauty in Him that we should desire Him." Those words fall upon the ears of the soul, so sensitive, so artistic, so impulsive, and she perceives their meaning. The crucifix, or rather the Crucified, that Figure torn and blood-stained, bleeding, disfigured on the cruel stark repellent outline of the cross—that cross with its human weight, its blood and horror, that is the reality. A crucifix like that will tell what love is like. Alas! a beautifully carved ivory crucifix in which the workmanship is more admired than the reality it depicts, that is what most want. But the real crucified—there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. He

is a Figure of horror and blood, of wounds and of torture—and the beholders say, " Ah, a crucifix like that makes me shiver ! " But she is in love, she is in love with that stark Figure, in all the horror of its blood-stained robe, because that same red Figure is in love with her : here is He in this dreadful anguish showing her what His love can do.

He suffers so—and she is sensitive : never shall sensitive nature rear itself again within her.

Again, it is music : the soul is so sensitive to sound that a wrong note is like cold water running down her back. And the music itself and its execution, and it is execution indeed at times, what is it but crucifixion. Her sensitive ear must be crucified. Though the singing be like the rasping of a spade clearing snow from the pavement she must become so dead to sound that she does not heed it. Every failure wounds the Heart of love. She can never become the bride of the Eternal Word unless she is dead to all that sight and sound can inflict upon her.

It is the same in hearing criticism. An artist shewing her pictures can only get from the onlooker, " Oh, I have seen ever so many worse pictures than these,"—left-handed, but an occasion for conquest. The soul has done her very best at a particular work, and all she hears is " Yes : we have some who have done it worse than that." But if the soul is to become united to the Bridegroom she must be indifferent to criticism. Sensitive nature again must be fastened to the cross. So sensitive are some souls that even a look pierces them : they are sure the look was intended for them, even when it was not.

Nothing does the soul find more difficult than to bring herself to that state in which she is heedless of the words and looks of those around her. Yet nothing is more essential. She cannot be a lover

unless she is dead to all the words, sayings and deeds of others.

Look again: food and drink; yes, meats for the body and the body for the meats, but God shall destroy both them and it. The soul must be absolutely indifferent as to the kind, quantity and quality of the food she takes. How can she be sensitive and delicate about food if she is a lover of that Jesus who hangs tormented on the cross.

Her sensitive appetite must be crushed, broken, allowed only what is necessary, that it be an obedient servant of the soul. She must never relax in this ceaseless war against nature if she is to come to the marriage, indeed, if she is to be a lover at all.

She must apply the sure remedy of fasting and bodily mortifications if she is to persevere in the way of love. There is no going along the way of love, with nature unmortified. Those who are so utterly blinded as to suppose they can cleave to their Love in the spirit, and let their senses go where they will can only come to utter and irrevocable shipwreck. Sensitive nature will become master, the soul the miserable slave, and the love of the Heavenly Bridegroom dead within her.

Nature is a beast that must be beaten: only so can the soul live the love-life with her crucified Jesus.

War, unrelenting and merciless, must be waged against every mood and fancy of nature by the soul that aspires to marriage with the Eternal Word. Every outward movement of her body, every expression, every look must be controlled: this is the way and the only way, and there is no other. The more the soul grows in love to Jesus the more merciless becomes the soul in the crucifixion of her body and her sensitive nature. For every failure

she applies the sharp correction of corporal pain; every unmortified act receives its corresponding punishment. Not for a moment can she indulge, not for a moment pass over a single weakness, for if she does she is lost: "I beat down my body, and bring it into subjection, lest after preaching to others I myself should be castaway." Those are the words the Great Apostle of the mystic life, St. Paul, said of himself, and the soul in love with Jesus marks them well and makes them her own.

CHAPTER XI

PASSIVE SENSE PURGATION

The soul has not long enjoyed the days of her first love ere she perceives that she can never attain union with her Divine Lover by her own active effort, even with the support of His ordinary Grace to help her.

If she is to be fitted for the Bridal, her Divine Lover must Himself transform her, she must be unresisting in His hands, let Him work His Will in her, purifying her whole being through the action of His infused Grace. Hers is the passive part, for she realizes full well that of herself she can do nothing. As she was unable of herself to produce the love that has begun to burn in her, for that quickening love was His work alone, so the perfection of it must likewise be His : He will work in her both to will and to do, but it must be He and He alone.

When the Divine Lover begins in her this work of purification, He does so by this burning of love, for she is purified in the heat of it, like as silver is purified in the fire. *Igne nos examinasti, sicut examinatur argentum.*

In this burning fire of supernatural love the soul is cleansed and purified in her sensitive nature and in her spirit, for this purification begins in the senses, and then proceeds to that of the spirit; but, as Scaramelli remarks, following herein the teaching of St. John of the Cross, although the purification of the senses precedes that of the spirit, yet in every sense purification, there is also somewhat of spirit

purification, as in every spirit purification, somewhat of sense-purification. Indeed, the senses are never perfectly purified till the spirit-purification is complete.

This becomes clearer if the primary cause of this passive purification is considered, for it is by means of the *infused Light* and the *burning heat of Love* which accompanies it, that the sensitive nature is cleansed and purified from its defects, and as this infused light is in the intellect, the spirit must partake in some degree in the purification of the senses, although in only a minor degree.

And it is evident, too, that even the sensitive nature cannot attain its perfect purification and become perfectly subject to the spirit, until the spirit in its turn is perfectly subject to God. *This infused light* and the *burning of love*, then, is the primary means by which the sensitive part of the soul is fitted for her union with the Bridegroom; the secondary means are the *natural passions* and desires, and the *craft of the Devil.*

The first and primary means, then, by which the soul is cleansed in her sensitive part is this infused purifying light and the burning love which accompanies it, for it is impossible to separate the light from the heat or the heat from the light; hence in like manner whenever this Divine Light shines in the soul the burning of love necessarily accompanies it, although owing to the new and unaccustomed path along which the soul is led she does not at first perceive it: for the effect of this light, because so overpassing the natural strength of the soul, produces a darkness in much the same way as the rays of the sun falling on the eyes of one suddenly coming out of a dark chamber overpower by their brightness the natural sight, so that everything appears to the eye as if dark, although there is the most brilliant light.

In this way, then, is the soul affected by this infusion of supernatural light, for the shining and the burning heat of this light cause intense suffering. She has enjoyed great sensible sweetness of devotion in her meditation and reflective prayer, and she suddenly finds all this sensible sweetness dried up within her, and at the same time an inability to continue in her accustomed way of prayer, if with violent effort she does get her mind to make some discursive reflections she still remains in a state of distaste and aridity; and her inability to continue this manner of prayer increasing, strive as she may, all her efforts are in vain, her mind refuses to act. The soul feels in this state that her Lover has abandoned and forsaken her, and all her former sweetness and consolation only makes the bitterness of her present arid desolation the more complete. The infused light is too strong for her, and used as she is to that sensible taste of devotion which she has hitherto experienced whenever she reflected on supernatural things, she is unable also to perceive the burning of love that begins to operate in her inmost soul, because it is so much more interior and spiritual: but it is there, and as she becomes more used to the light she also perceives its heat, just as the one who has come out of the darkness into the sunshine begins to see in that light with a perfection unknown before and to perceive the warmth of the sun's rays.

There are three signs of this passive sense-purification, by which it may easily be recognised.

The first is that when the soul thus finds all her sensible devotion and satisfaction in the things of the spirit dried up within her, so that the thought of them brings no unction or delight, she is likewise utterly unable to satisfy herself with the things of the world in which she had formerly found her satisfaction.

Neither in the things of God nor in the things of this world is there any relief: if she ever tries in her desolation to find consolation in earthly things they only generate in her loathing and disgust. This is far otherwise with a soul growing cold in love, for then she turns and easily satisfies herself with material things.

Indeed, the soul is not conscious on her part of any relaxation, neglect, or fault that should have brought her into this desolate state: for there is none.

The second is that the soul is intensely solicitous that in all things she may be pleasing to her Divine Lover: indeed, the more her aridity and desolation grow the more resolutely is she determined that neither darkness nor suffering shall hinder her in her love and service: her will gains strength in this darkness and her love increases, although she only feels the sense of being abandoned and rejected, but yet she only has one love and one desire; and in the deep of her soul as she perseveres in this resolution she begins to perceive the presence of burning love. Not for the world would she relax in any way either in her prayers or her mortifications: rather she prolongs the one and increases the other, and although nature finds this perseverance hard, yet her will remains inflexible, and urges her ever forward to greater efforts.

The third is, as we have already mentioned, through the abundance and brilliancy of the infused light she is no longer able to continue her meditations or exercise her imagination, and although there may be brief moments when by means of violent efforts and with great difficulty for a short while she is able to make some reflective prayer, yet her permanent state is one of complete inability to do so.

When these three signs concur they are an assured evidence that the Divine Lover has begun

His work of passive purification in the sensitive nature of the soul.

At times the sense of desolation and aridity in prayer may arise from weakness of mind or body, or from a passing feeling of melancholy or depression; and the same is true of the inability to meditation and reflection, which may arise from similar causes, but then the painful anxiety and determination despite all to seek only the pleasure of the Divine Lover will be wanting in the soul, and where that is wanting the other signs are not sufficient of themselves to indicate that the soul is in this state of passive purification.

The second means of purification is the *natural passions*: these appear to the soul to have grown in strength and violence when she has entered this night of sense. This arises from the Light and burning Love with which she begins to be illuminated and inflamed. For motions and movements of passion that passed unobserved before, now pain and disquiet her, for the light manifests them and the burning love causes exquisite pain because she knows how these movements of her sensitive nature grieve her Love.

The action of the various passions is, of course, vastly different in one soul from what it is in another.

Certainly all the sensitive nature seems up in arms, and in some, quite small incidents produce violent motions of anger and dislike against particular persons, for little or no reason, and the soul is terrified lest she has consented to these motions, they were so acute and so vivid: at the same time she is conscious that all the while she never ceased to pray for deliverance. Then other souls are afflicted with the most terrible temptations against chastity: the most loathsome imaginations and hateful images thrust themselves unwanted upon

her; even at her wonted times of prayer they pursue her, and so cruel, so fierce, and persistent the onset that the soul is agonized at the thought that she may have consented, yet she knows never for an instant did she cease her prayers and cries for help. The more naturally pure the soul the greater the agony and torture she endures. She feels hateful and loathsome to herself, and she feels her Lover can only hate and loathe her, too. The infused Light with its awful white shining makes the horror more apparent, while the burning love makes these ghastly attacks more bitter. The soul in her anguish cries out with St. Paul: "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet through the anguish and misery of this conflict the soul never entirely loses her confidence, although there are moments when she is moved to exclaim: "I am cast away out of the sight of Thine eyes." It was in a moment of fierce conflict like this that St. Benedict rushed forth from the cave and rolled his naked flesh in the thorn bush with such violence that he never suffered the like temptation again. Indeed, the infliction of very sharp bodily pain is often the soul's only means of ridding herself of these trials.

When this horror is past the soul's disposition is such that she would die rather than voluntarily suffer such horrid temptations to return to her again; she is unwearied in seeking always to please her Love, the least thing that in the shining light and burning love she knows may hurt Him pierces her with the most bitter grief; and she is conscious that even when these temptations were at their worst, she had no will except to utterly hate and reject them.

God Himself will perfect His work in the soul, for it is He alone Who can infuse into her that perfect mastery and entire control of her sensitive nature by which it shall be brought into subjection to Himself.

By unceasing prayer and frequent fasting, by sparing use of meat, by hard bodily labours, the soul is strengthened during the days of this conflict, and, as we have said, by the infliction of sharp physical pain.

There is yet a third means of this sense-purification, the craft of the Devil himself.

This work of purification is so difficult and arduous, says Lopez Ezquerra, because its end is nothing less than to transform from earthly to Heavenly life; that dead to all sensible pleasures, and living only in the spirit, all her powers habitually and fully subdued, His Divine Love may dwell in her and perfectly unite her to Himself.

Some souls there are who, that they may attain this transformation, require a more severe instrument for their purification than those already described. God, good and merciful, allows the Evil Spirit himself to torment with most bitter pains. In this way God, as it were, makes the Devil a minister of this purification. It is of this purification that Philip of the Trinity says that it is perfected by satanic persecution; and although thus bitter is also exceedingly efficacious, for on the one side the devils, that they may turn aside the soul from the path she has begun to tread, most cruelly afflict her to the extent of the Divine permission; on the other hand the soul, through this persecution, is terrified and reduced to such misery that she believes herself to be lost. She believes these torments have befallen her as a punishment for her sins: the secret of the Divine goodness is hidden from her, and she believes she is already delivered to devils, in antici-

pation of the eternal pain she shall suffer hereafter. Whence, under these afflictions, profoundly humbled before God she is purged from her former faults.

The Devil sometimes terrifies the soul by his nearness to her: he seems to have entered within her, and she hears his mocking laugh as he assures her that, despite all her efforts, she shall be his for ever, that her Lover has forsaken and rejected her. Sometimes she hears as if with her natural hearing the cruel compelling voice of her tempter.

Then again, often the Devil raises the most cruel hatred against the soul on the part of those amongst whom she lives, and her life is thus made a continual torment; but the soul, if she is to persevere in faithful love, must bear all this with joyful resignation, glad that she has somewhat to suffer, never making any answer to the bitterest reproaches, but always preserving herself in calm and tranquillity, never answering with angry or bitter words, no matter how great the provocation.

Then, again, the Devil has a way of trying to excite in the soul an aversion and dislike of her spiritual guide: this becomes very harmful to the soul if she conceals it through a false shame; on the other hand, if she manifests it she is immediately delivered from it.

The Devil is able thus to torment the soul in this passive sense-purification by *Obsession and Circumcession;* that is, in the first case by coming into the imagination and indeed making his presence felt with such terrible intensity that the soul feels he has her in his power; or, in the second case, by coming upon the soul from every side, like a raging lion circling around its prey.

In all the agony of these satanic assaults, in which the soul suffers such indescribable anguish, her greatest pain is caused by the growing bright-

ness of the Divine Light and the growing heat of burning love, for the more the light increases the more hateful and loathsome the satanic suggestions become, while the heat of love increasing she agonizes at the thought of offending her love.

Yet in the midst of this suffering and torment the burning of love in the deep of her soul begins to become more manifest, and, in the storm that rages round her, come moments of relief in which she is reassured and knows her Divine Lover has not cast her off.

Then, again, the darkness descends, and she suffers in aridity of spirit, in darkness. At one time her passions rage, at others the demons rage; yet despite all the conflict the soul still holds on her way.

The new way in which she is being led becomes more familiar to her; she abandons her struggle to return to discursive prayer and meditation, and waits with loving attention for her Lover to manifest Himself, and, with the Sweet Singer of Israel, says *Audiam quid loquatur in me Dominus*. She begins to look and love, her prayer becomes just a simple, wordless loving glance of affection at her Lover, Who in this new Light appears ever more and more lovable, and by this loving beholding the burning of love grows strong within her.

This purification, so exceedingly bitter and painful, makes ready the soul for the Bridegroom and draws her nearer to her bridal day.

The fruit of this suffering is seen in the growing courage and fortitude which the soul exhibits, and by the domination she has attained over her passions, and indeed over the whole of her sensitive nature, so that she orders, directs, and regulates them in a manner unknown before.

She is then prepared and made ready for her spirit-purification, which is the immediate disposi-

tion to her union and marriage with the Bridegroom.

She enters on that habitual loving knowledge of God which as long as she used imaginary forms and images, as in meditative and discoursive prayer, was not possible. Now this sweet, simple, loving apprehension of the Divine Lover becomes her normal state in prayer, and the mode in which she converses with Him.

By this forsaking of sensible and material forms and images she is freed from the power of the devils, as they can only reach her through the medium of these sensible representations.

CHAPTER XII

THE QUIET AND CONFIDENCE OF LOVE

As in the course of time lovers come to a closer and more intimate knowledge of each other, with their growing knowledge comes a corresponding growth in love. Love grows by knowledge; there is a fulness, a depth, an intensity in their love that they knew not before; a sure confidence, a quiet placid joy in their mutual love that no mere words can express; that wonderful sense of satisfaction and repose in the consciousness of loving and being loved, with an assurance of its constancy, producing in the soul of the lover a restful satisfaction, a plenitude of tranquil joy, that only those who possess it can fully know. They exist for each other, and in the quiet confident gladness of their love they rest with infinite content. That is natural love as it grows and develops in the hearts of the lovers.

And the development of supernatural love follows the same path, and experiences this same restful happiness, but in a manner far more wonderful and inexpressibly more ardent in its sweet burning intensity.

The soul, once she has fallen in love with Jesus, has begun a life so entirely different to that she lived before that she seems to herself not only to have entered another world, but to have become another creature, as indeed she has, for she is a new creature in Jesus and all things have become new.

She perceives this in the way in which all the outward things which formerly so completely filled her life have fallen out of it, and how now her Lover alone fully and completely satisfies all the longing of her heart. And then there are those wonderful moments when the Light and burning Heat of her Love overwhelm her with such piercing sweetness that her whole being is stricken dumb in wondering adoration at His amazing condescension, moments that pass all too quickly, but yet are only an intensification of her ordinary Love-life.

Then in course of time her knowledge of her Love increases, and the assurance of His Love becomes more manifest, she begins to feel within her a wonderfully sweet placid tranquillity in the knowledge that she loves Him and He loves her and in this sweet burning of love she would rest for ever. The agitation of awakened love has given way to such an assurance of love that, reposing in the arms of her Love, she enjoys a peace within, such as transcends all she had ever dared to think of as possible. It is the peace which this world cannot give, neither can it take away; and with this peace there comes within her a bold, daring confidence in her Lover, a boldness that springs from the assurance she experiences within that she is very dear to Him, and that, little and nothing as she is, He values her as His most precious treasure, and accepts with loving affection every little offering she makes to Him. She is not troubled by the infinite disparity between herself and Him, but with inconceivable content rests in His Arms, assured that He will work in her all His Will. Indeed, at times, she feels even the Heavenly Country can bring her no greater bliss than that she now enjoys.

This is the second of those habitual or permanent states of contemplation through which the soul passes and in which she is made ready for the

marriage; in the language of Mystical Theology it is the *state of Quiet*. Antony of the Holy Spirit thus briefly defines it: "A certain joyousness of the will, desiring nothing save in this manner to persevere abiding in God. The soul sees herself *juxta Deum*, greatly loved, and held as a most precious prize by Him and protected and guarded by His singular providence."

Vallgornera, writing more at length, says: "The state of Quiet is an assured joyfulness of the will, seeking nothing save thus joyfully to rest in God. The soul beholds herself as greatly loved and had as a most precious treasure by Him, and like a most dearly loved daughter surrounded and protected by His providence; in this love the will reposes as in the full satisfaction already attained of all its desires. Others say that through the previous state of recollection there is begotten in the soul a delicious quiet and interior peace, with such sweetness that it seems to her nothing beyond this can be desired, because God places Himself so nigh, and so unites her with Himself, gives such stillness to all her powers, that she as it were tastes already something of that good which He communicates to His elect in the Kingdom of Heaven."

The soul soon perceives within herself the effects of this new state in her spiritual experience on which she has entered. This sweet internal peace becomes part of her normal life, and nothing without can disturb her now. She has the most absolute and assured confidence in the Love of her Jesus, and she remains in perfect peace, no matter how disturbing the outward happenings around her may be, for she knows that not only His fore-seeing, not only His omnipotence, but His Infinite Love is over and above all.

All through the long story of the Church of God, one fact shines out, the supreme peace and con-

fidence of the Lovers of Jesus, however dark the night and however fierce the storm; they are not terrified by the greatness of the forces arrayed against them, or by the seeming conflict between the events of time and the goodness and love of their Lord. They had perfect peace and perfect confidence, because resting with tranquil assurance in the arms of Infinite Love.

St. Paul, that ardent lover of Jesus, when he came to Rome, was not overwhelmed by the sight of all the magnificent temples and their stately worship: he never for a moment thought of returning to Palestine to gather enough money to build a temple that should rival them. No, a prisoner in chains, he determined to know nothing but His Divine Lover. Christ and Him crucified—a figure of horror, all blood-red, lifted up on the cruel stark gibbet of the Cross—a criminal nailed to the wood. That is how the lovers of Jesus went to victory. Never for a moment did their confidence and assured peace falter or fail.

How strange it was to see so many good people staggered by the late war: it was so overwhelming in the vastness of its reach and in its fearful horror that they wondered where God, His Love and His providence came in; but His Love was over all, and one day we shall see that all was well, as we are assured it is now.

When the flood of the Reformation rose so high and beat upon the Church with such savage fierceness; when the great revolution overwhelmed kings and kingdoms in its resistless onward surge; when at the close of the great war, crowns and kingdoms fell helplessly, there were many who were filled with consternation and dread and troubled with fear for God's Kingdom on Earth. But His lovers, they were unafraid, they never lost their peace, nor ever shall; their confidence is in their

Divine Lover, and their life is in Him, and they know that all is well because He the Divine Lover is greater than all. Let the soul have her eyes fixed upon her Jesus and nothing will daunt her. St. Peter in the boat, with great confidence looked at Jesus, and said: "Lord, if it is You, bid me come to You on the water," and immediately Jesus said, "Come!" As long as his eyes held fast to Jesus he was secure, but immediately he looked at the waves he began to sink: he has lost his confidence by looking away from the source of his confidence to the black waters that were ready to engulf him.

The first effect in the soul of the lover of this state of Quiet, then, is this assured confidence and inward peace that nothing can shake.

And the second effect is a most profound humility: she is simply overwhelmed with the sense of her own nothingness, her own unworthiness, and filled with amazement that He, so great and so wonderful, should have chosen her to be His Bride: she looks at herself and sees her misery, sees there is nothing in her that could possibly attract His love. Yet she knows He is in love with her and she with Him. And all she can do is to humble herself utterly, and rejoice in His greatness; and be glad and overflowing with gratitude that He Who is so great and so infinitely beyond her should yet cast the eyes of His Love upon her and take her for His Own. But she cannot for one instant doubt His Love, she knows and experiences it, and the assurance of it only intensifies the sense of her own nothingness.

The third effect is seen in the soul's ever increasing love of prayer and solitude. The hours of prayer are the times to which she turns with eager longing, as the moments when she can with greater freedom give herself wholly up to her

Love, and looking and loving, grow stronger in the burning of its heat.

Then in the fourth place her intellect receives a great and ever-increasing light: more and more, all that her Lover is becomes manifest to her through the wonderful light which He bestows on her understanding. The Holy Ghost fulfils in her the promise of Jesus: "He shall take of mine and shew it to you"; she beholds with ever-growing wonder each fresh manifestation of her Lover's greatness, and her love is fed and grows on this beholding. Then, as a consequence of this, her will receives extraordinary strength: things that formerly seemed impossible she now accomplishes with ease, because Love is burning within her, and it is her Lover's strength which she is using; without Him she can do nothing, but all things are possible to her with Him. She is astonished at what she does, but she sees that as it is Him in her, there is no ground for surprise.

But there is also a false state of quiet, either self-produced through the imagination, or caused by the Devil himself, who, transforming himself into an angel of light produces in the soul this false sweetness and tranquillity, which, because it has a certain likeness to the true quiet which the Divine Lover bestows upon her, may sometimes deceive the soul; yet it does not penetrate into the inmost depth of the soul, but remains on the surface and only affects the sensitive nature; but this false peace and quiet is easily recognised by its effects which are the very contrary of those produced by true supernatural Quiet and clearly manifest its origin.

If this quiet is self-produced the intellect remains unenlightened and the will without any access of new strength, and after the sensible sweetness has passed away, it leaves behind it a

sense of emptiness and aridity. On the other hand, if the Devil be the cause, there is a sense of disturbance and trouble in the soul, the sweetness brings no peace or sure confidence but a restless unquietness that never seems to rest or be satisfied with anything.

There is a marked want of humility which makes itself manifest whenever the soul is resisted in anything; there is a self-confidence, together with a perverse clinging to her own way and will, which make clearly manifest the spirit that is leading her.

Then her intellect is darkened, because she has become self-centred and her glance has been turned away from the Divine Lover. Her will is wanting in resolution and firmness of purpose, she is constant in nothing, she will not set herself to the unsparing mortification of herself; is full of excuses for her want of perseverance, often proposing, but never bringing anything to completion.

The tree is known by its fruits, and it is by its fruit that the true peace and interior quiet is distinguished from the false. The soul thus entering on the path of interior Quiet must be vigilant and watchful, lest under the appearance of good the Devil should succeed in insinuating his false quiet in order to deceive her.

The soul who is really experiencing the true interior Quiet produced in her by Jesus Himself wages a ceaseless, unsparing war against herself and her own desires and inclinations; the Will of her Love is her life; she dreads the least infidelity to Him; she never clings to any preconceived idea, but is humble and teachable, and with eager haste speeds to do whatever her Divine Lover requires of her. She is extremely humble and obedient to her spiritual director, and thinks of herself as the least of all, and while filled with an intense realisation of her own unworthiness to fill the great

position her Lover has chosen for her, at the same time she is filled with a great and loving confidence in Him and a sense of assurance that all the ardent longing of her heart will be satisfied; the fiery burning of her love finds its full consummation when she comes to the glorious day of her marriage with her Lover and her God.

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE'S PASSIVE SPIRIT PURIFICATION

Love in the effects it produces in the heart of the lover is strangely paradoxical; the very love that quickens the heart with thrilling joy at the same time pierces it with the most agonising pain. The more love grows, the more these contrary effects grow side by side. The love burns joyously towards the Lover; this same love burns with strange pain towards the soul herself when she perceives she has said or done something that grieves her love, and the pain will be in proportion to her love, and produced by it: this is true in natural love, and as the joy of that love can become so overwhelming as almost to stay the operation of the senses, so does the pain of it produce a like effect.

It is in this painful burning of love that the soul in love with the Heavenly Bridegroom becomes perfectly purified, tried like silver is tried, seven times in the fire; and by that purification is fitted for her wedding day.

In the ordinary course of her love-life the soul, after the fiery purification of her sense-nature, enjoys some interval of respite from this love-pain, more or less complete, experiences moments of sweet refreshment, fuller and more abundant than she has hitherto tasted, because as her sense-nature has been made almost wholly subject to her spirit-nature through the refining process of love's burning pain, freed from the intrusion of outward things she is enabled to enjoy the presence of the Divine Lover without disquiet.

Love operates in the soul absolutely as God wills, and although in the normal course of things the purification of the sense-nature precedes that of the spirit-nature with a more or less prolonged interval between, yet, as in the case of St. Angela of Foligno, the two-fold purification of sense and spirit nature may proceed simultaneously.

Lopez Ezquerra remarks that the soul, after the purification of her sense nature for an interval of time that may extend to years, enjoys alternately the refreshment of consolation and the toil of labour . . . while she reposes sweetly and happily with the Heavenly Lover in the full light of the mid-day, suddenly there comes upon her the blackness of a most terrible night; she is snatched violently away from the light into an overwhelming darkness such as may be felt; as if, when she was beholding the sun shining in mid-day splendour, suddenly and quite unforeseen that light should vanish and she find herself shrouded in the deepest shades of night. In that manner the soul enters into that night in which her spirit-nature undergoes that purification which prepares her more immediately for her marriage with the Bridegroom, in which night also the sense-nature is finally purified from whatever defects it had retained after the preceding purification.

Lopez Ezquerra points out very clearly how much more intense, fierce, and terrible is the spirit-purification of the soul than that of the senses which has usually preceded it. The first purification of the senses makes the inferior or sense nature of the soul proportionate to and perfectly subordinate to her superior or spirit nature. By the purification of her superior nature the soul is disposed and made ready for her union with God. There is an infinite distance between the rational creature and God; there is likewise a great gulf between the inferior

and superior part of the same soul; of necessity, therefore, the purgation of spirit must be greater and stronger than that of sense. This spirit purification is so much stronger and more terrible than that of sense as Heaven is distant from earth, spirit from flesh, and suffering of body from the intimate and subtle pain of spirit.

By such a comparison in some sort the contrast with this spirit-purification and that which has gone before it may be realized and understood.

"Words fail to express," says Philip of the Trinity, "the straightness of this night of the spirit, how great the horror, how fearful and how intimate the affliction of spirit"; and St. John of the Cross adds: "Both sense and spirit are overpowered by such an immense obscurity, they are so afflicted and so agonised that the soul would gladly embrace death as a relief and solace from her pain."

The primary means of this terrific spirit-purification are the same as in that of the senses: the shining of the infused light, the burning heat of the infused love, for, as says Lopez Ezquerra, the infused flame of burning love is inseparable from all infused purifying Light. The shining of the Light so overpowers the intellect that it is as if stricken by blindness; through the piercing rays of this fierce white Light the soul beholds all her miseries with a cruel distinctness never known before—every little fault and frailty, every little act of self-seeking, every movement of cowardice, every shrinking from sacrifice, all manifested in their naked reality, for in the white shining of this light all the feeble reasons and excuses by which the soul soothed herself before are blotted out. The more clearly in this light she sees her Divine Lover, the more clearly she sees herself, and this seeing produces the most intense darkness.

This fire of love burns with a fierce hatred against

herself in proportion as it burns with ardent love to Him: she becomes hateful to herself and believes she must be still more loathsome and hateful to Him; her weakness and selfishness her self-seeking, how vile this shining light and burning heat make her appear.

The burning grows more intense: even her ardent movements of love she sees full well had much of self mixed with them: she sees it all with such fearful distinctness, and the fierce hatred and loathing of herself becomes a piercing, biting, bitter pain.

She is so overwhelmed that she desires only to hide away from the sight of His eyes; she cannot bear His presence, she feels only the burning reproach that shall scorch her up if she see Him. His Love so wonderful, so amazing: hers so mean, paltry, and miserable.

With what dreadful distinctness she realizes His Eternal and immutable Justice, His supreme Majesty, His spotless Sanctity. How shall she dare lift her eyes to Him, when she sees herself as an object which makes her shiver with horror? *Dolores inferni circumdederunt me*: only thus can she express the piercing anguish that the shining and burning of love produce within her.

This torment of soul, by the very strength of its coming, overwhelms her so that she faints and falls at the splendour of the Divine Majesty, as through the overshadowing of her reason she can no longer see aright; all the good she has wrought brings her no consolation, for either it is utterly forgotten, or if remembered she feels it as only a more certain evidence of her condemnation.

All the many evidences of her Lover's affection for her are swallowed up in the overwhelming grief which transfixes the soul: she is convinced that everything she says and does, all she tries to do for Him, only wounds and hurts Him, Whom yet she

loves with a love stronger than death; that He rejects all her offerings and has cast her off for ever.

"The pain of the soul," says St. John of the Cross, "on account of her impurity, is immense, when she is thus pierced and illuminated by that Divine Light. For when this pure Light pierces the soul for her cleansing, she sees herself as so impure and miserable that she believes God must have turned Himself from her. . . Then the soul, from the sense and apprehension of the miseries in which she exists, gives herself up for lost. Hence she breaks forth into such profound groanings, and is pierced with such sorrow as may not be described."

This burning of love torments the soul, so that she suffers the pains of Purgatory: indeed, it is her purgatory, and, like Purgatory hereafter, it is Love that inflicts the pain, and in this bitter purgatory the soul remains as if bereft of all hope of escape; she grieves and sorrows for the joy and peace she once enjoyed, with a full conviction that it shall never be hers again. The will strives in one direction and another for solace and rest, and finds none; wherever she turns she finds sorrow on sorrow, and, most bitter of all, she fears even to breathe the Name of her Love, while the fire within her burns so fiercely that she feels as if enclosed in a furnace in which she is being burnt and suffocated.

So great and so overmastering is the pain of this burning love in the soul that it overflows into the body, and the heart feels pierced with a sensible pain, so acute and so keen as almost to deprive the body of all power of sense and movement.

She thirsts with more ardent desire for her Love, yet she is so overshadowed by the darkness which enshrouds her, that she seems even physically incapable of crying out to her Love, and within is overpowered by the dread assurance that, even

though she cry to Him, He will neither hear nor heed her.

The soul's memory, intellect, and will all partake in this tremendous overshadowing: the white Light and the burning Love sweep through them, the light piercing, the fire burning until every defect is finally consumed: for the Divine Lover acts as a refiner of silver, which is seven times tried in the fire.

The imagination is plunged in such total darkness that everything it does perceive is distorted and inverted.

Although the soul has become not less but more pleasing to her Divine Lover, nearer and dearer to Him, she cannot believe it. Her imagination only pictures Him with His Face averted from her. He has become her enemy, His love has turned to hatred, and, indeed, rightly so, for everything she does, all she thinks and speaks only offends Him; wherever she looks she only sees sin: all her past failures all her past neglect of grace, all her want of response to His Love, all rise up to condemn her. How dare she ever have aspired to His Love? True, she can behold His love, His mercy, His compassion embracing every other soul; she is assured of the exhaustless measure of His Love for others; yes: for everyone else—but it is not for her. She can only behold His averted Face and only perceive within her the sense of her utter dereliction. "I am cast away out of the sight of Thine eyes. I cry and Thou hearest not": that is the language of the soul in this intense darkness.

When she strives to speak to her Love, her tongue cleaves to the roof of her mouth, her soul cannot find utterance. He is before her, but she cannot speak to Him: and yet she loves Him as she never loved before. In her misery she says to herself: "At least, at least He can't stop me loving Him

here, even if I shall never see His Face hereafter." It is the very intensity of her love that intensifies her pain.

She approaches the Altar rails and receives her Jesus into her heart in the darkness of bare faith alone: if obedience did not command and she go thus blindly to her Lord, she would not dare to come nigh to receive Him; and even so at times she seems held back, as she rises to advance, by a power almost physical: but she wrenches herself free because she knows if she falters she is lost.

It is through the intense darkness of this night that her imagination and her memory come forth fully cleansed and purified. How great a work is being wrought at this time! For all the going back on past events only holds her back in her Love-life. She is carried back first to one thing, then another. That occasion when she might have acted in quite another way; that time when an opportunity of suffering in silence came and she failed; those bitter words spoken to her, that unkind act; whatever of this past she recalls, whether joyful or sorrowful, brings with it some disturbance and some disquiet. Yet all disquiet about the past is vain: the past is past; what has been done has been done, nothing can change it, the soul must let the dead past bury the past. And the fiery heat of this purification will blot out all memory of the past. The soul will cast herself backwards no more; henceforth she will concern herself with the living present, and that alone. Neither when this purification is ended will the imagination trouble her any more with its manifold representations and ever-varying imagery. The fever and fret that arises in the soul when she contemplates the future, the things she fears will happen, how she shall act when they do, how shall she face the temptations, the sufferings, the losses that her imagination assures

her await her in the future—all is stilled and the imagination utterly emptied of all these vain and useless fancies.

In the black darkness of this night, indeed, all these representations of memory and imagination cease, but the soul is tormented by others more terrifying, by most painful scruples, so that she believes she has sinned when she has not; almost her every word and movement cause her fear and anxiety; her spiritual director who strives to calm and guide her, she feels convinced, does not know her real state; she has misled him, and if only he saw her as she really is, she is convinced he would be of the same opinion as herself, that she was rightly abandoned by God. She is excited to movements of dislike and uncharitableness against those around her, with either little or no reason at all.

All sorts of doubts about Faith itself crowd in upon her, all sorts of inconceivable phantoms combine to disturb her; the sensitive nature is affected by the rush of fanciful representations that fill the imagination, and her whole being plunged into inexplicable torment and confusion.

The intellect shares in the bitterness of this passive purification and suffers to an even greater degree than either the memory or the imagination, for it suffers a seeming eclipse; it can neither reason rightly and consecutively, nor reach any definite conclusion; no sooner, indeed, does a conclusion seem to have been reached, when the whole process begins over again. The intellect doubts and questions everything. The intellect, formerly so clear and swift in its reasoning and decisions in the things that concern the soul herself, is impotent.

The soul appears to herself never to have been right or just in any judgment she has ever made: all her intellectual operations seem to have been mistaken, unjust, and wrong.

It is the White Light, and the burning love that ever accompanies, doing its work, and when this overshadowing shall be past the intellect will be like the memory and the imagination brought to rest. No longer will it be judging the actions of this one and that, determining intentions and motives, but wholly absorbed in the great shining of the Divine Lover.

The soul suffers in a tempest of inexpressible temptations that rage like furies around her, and, indeed, so intense and so fierce their onset that the soul almost believes it is herself that utters blasphemies against Him Whom she loves so passionately, and her agony and grief become insupportable under the fearful strain.

Waves of disquiet, weariness, disgust, surge over her, and she seems helpless and will-less in the horror of this night; she seems held as in a vice, and there seems no way of escape; she despairs of finding any relief, and so vehement at times does her anguish become that it seems as if reason itself must break beneath the strain.

The soul's intercourse with creatures at this time adds yet more to her sufferings, for they cannot help her, as they do not understand her state or the way the Light and Fire of Love are operating in her: when they try to console and comfort her they only increase her pain. The advice they give is useless, the remedies they propose inadequate to bring her any relief. There is no relief for the soul until the Light and Heat of Love have completed their work; then she will come out of that darkness with her whole nature renewed.

She enters a new world of light, and a new world of sweet burning love, such as surpasses all previous experience and exceeds all expectation. Her Marriage Day is nigh at hand.

Lopez Ezquerra, enumerating the signs by

which this spirit purification can be recognised, says:

"Firstly, the soul cannot in any way or by any means continue her discursive prayer, through the exercise of the imagination or by means of sensible images.

"Secondly, surrounded in this darkness the soul feels herself burnt and wounded by this immense heat of love, to such an extent that she can perceive nothing else.

"Thirdly, she possesses a most ardent love towards the Divine Lover; she mourns and grieves, and solely because she believes that she displeases Him in everything, not on account of the pain she suffers.

"Fourthly, despite the anxiety, the darkness, and the bitter sorrow, the soul is excessively careful, not only to avoid sins and imperfections, but is most eagerly searching and seeking whatever may be most pleasing to the Will of her Divine Lover.

"Fifthly, the soul in the black night of this purification is not troubled by temptations and suggestions of the enemy, because the anguish of the great darkness and the heat of the burning are such that all lesser pains are scarcely perceptible to her. Thus any attempts the Devil may make at this time appear so distant and so far off that they never succeed in drawing the soul's attention to them.

"During the whole course of this fiery ordeal the soul in her inmost depth has never lost her peace, and, indeed, in the midst of all her agonising pain her peace is growing and making its presence ever more and more felt. It is the two-fold action of love, the love flaming upwards to Jesus, with a joyous ardour, and burning with exceedingly bitter keen hatred and detestation against herself; indeed, it is in this last night of the spirit that this two-fold action of love reaches its climax."

Philip of the Trinity points out the double fruit of this spirit purification of the soul. The one is a clear self-knowledge, with profound humility. This arises from the infused Light of contemplation which is the principle of this purification, and by the Divine disposition pervades all the secrets of the soul's conscience, and manifests the minutest atoms, defects, and stains, however deeply hidden. That is made clear by a comparison with material light; when the sun's rays penetrate a room they manifest the smallest particles floating in the air, which were not visible in the ordinary light. From this manifestation of her own defects the soul conceives the humblest and meanest opinion of herself.

The second is the continuous conscious presence of the Divine Lover; the knowledge of herself and her own misery produce in her a perfect knowledge of God, for her miseries cry aloud for His mercy. Yet this knowledge is exceedingly obscure, at times scarcely perceptible, and it is perceived only in a general way, because the distinct knowledge of God awaits the soul when she has reached the state of union.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INTOXICATING JOY OF LOVE

That there is an intoxication of love as well as of wine is known to all who have any experience of it.

Love cannot be restrained either in the manner of its coming or the mode of its manifestation. There are times when the lovers seem beside themselves with the joy of each other's presence; their utterances and actions to the non-lover seem utterly unintelligible and foolish, the unceasing repetitions of the same words and acts over and over again, altogether meaningless. But they are neither meaningless nor foolish to the lovers: it is simply that the tide of love surging up from within has broken all bounds and found external means of manifesting itself, and the more naturally emotional the lovers are, the more unrestrained the manifestation of their love, while on the other hand, those whose nature is more quiet and restrained will burn the more fiercely within, although without they may give little indication of the fire that is consuming them.

This intoxicating joy of love which has been manifested through the ages by natural love has its counterpart in that supernatural *intoxication of Love* in the souls of the lovers of Jesus.

The sense of the greatness of His Love so oppresses them that the soul is entirely carried out of herself; her speech and action seem to the eye of those who have never been touched by this burn-

ing flame of love as supremely foolish; indeed to the ears of the non-lover the expressions that fall from the lips of a soul so caught by the love of Jesus seem unreal and exaggerated. Yet to the lover they are not so; every word the soul employs falls utterly short of expressing the wonderful joy with which she is flooded; she repeats words well knowing their utter inadequacy. "My Love, my Love, my Love," she says, "I die of love, I cannot support more." The language of love is so extremely simple, because the lover realises that words can in fact convey no idea of what the soul is experiencing. In the earlier stages of the soul's progress, especially when she is in the state of Recollection or Quiet, these passing moments of spiritual intoxication frequently find external manifestation, especially if the soul herself is of a naturally affectionate and emotional nature.

This explains all the strange things the lovers of Jesus have done under the intoxicating influence of this joy of love. It is true that these external manifestations of love are not so perfect as those which are experienced wholly interiorly in the depths of the soul, but these graces are received according to the state and condition of the recipient, and even the same soul may receive at a more advanced period of her life a far greater and more overpowering tide of love within her without expressing anything of its presence by external words or signs; while in the earlier stages of her love-life a lesser inflowing of love found her so overcome by it that she was utterly unable to restrain its outward manifestation.

Love has something in its very nature that is resistless, and when it comes upon the soul in this manner she cannot at times restrain the tears of joy that flow from her eyes, or the words of love that rise to her lips, or the movements of love that are

excited in her by its presence. It comes over her wave upon wave, so that she is carried beyond herself and her ordinary way of acting.

But her later experiences of this intoxicating joy of love are all received within; she is carried above herself on the flood-tide of these wonderful impressions made upon her by her Lover, yet outwardly she does not lose her calm, and beyond a more than ordinarily radiant expression of happiness, gives no exterior sign of the overwhelming joy that floods her within. Of course these experiences cannot be of long continuance, or the thread of her earthly life would be broken, so unutterably piercing is the sweet joy that surges through her.

Richard of St. Victor has described a soul when she is thus intoxicated with the joy of her Divine Love:

"Hearken now to the voice of some soul loving and burning with love; mark what she thinks and how she speaks within herself of Him she loves so much, whom she so greatly adores. What says she, what does she speak within?

"'How good, how kind, how sweet, how delightful, how loveable, how altogether desirable is my Love! How wonderful that He should love me! How happy I that He has judged me worthy of His Love. Happy I who thus enjoy Him. Blessed indeed I who possess Him.' This, if I mistake not, is the voice of exultation and thanksgiving always arising from the lips of love in the ears of the Divine Goodness."

Here we see again the simplicity of love's speech, simple because as the soul draws closer to the Divine Simplicity she herself becomes likened to that simplicity and loves Him rather with the voiceless speech of her soul than the outward words of her lips.

Lopez Ezquerra, in *Lucerna mystica,* defining this intoxication of love, says : " There is a two-fold spiritual intoxication, one without disturbance of the mind, in which only the body is disquieted, and with unwonted, joyous words, movements and gestures demonstrates the joy that fills her, which happens to the beginners and those who are progressing in love; the other in which the mind and body rejoices with a sweet quietness which belongs to the perfect."

Love is repaid by love alone; the soul perceiving this incoming of Divine Love flowing into her, strives to respond on her part to her Love, and because as yet she has not been fully transformed by love, she is overcome and carried beyond herself by the strength of the Divine Power, she perceives her response to be hopelessly inadequate, her Lover acts upon her with such power that she is intoxicated by the strength of a love that so greatly exceeds her powers of reception.

The soul must always beware of a false intoxication of love that manifests itself and may sometimes be mistaken for Divine Love, particularly when her nature is naturally affectionate, loving and emotional.

There is always danger of deception in the case of merely exterior manifestations, as they may be excited by the soul herself, by her desire to experience such, and sometimes through a desire of notice and to be supposed in a far different state to that in which she really is.

The soul truly experiencing these marks of love will always be ardent in the mortification of her whole nature, in self contempt; indeed, it is in persevering self-renunciation and love of the cross, in utter conformity to the Divine Will in all the changes and chances of her life, that the proof of a true love of Jesus is found, and the assurance

that these movements of love are really from Him.

Where there is a certain arrogance, satisfaction and pride in such experiences, and where they are readily shewn in the presence of others, it is evident that they proceed not from true love, but are either simulated by the soul herself or insinuated by the Devil.

As Lopez well remarks: "All unwonted exterior gestures, movements, ejaculations, sighs and the like, which some manifest in the presence of men; other than those of modest gladness, watchful gravity and unaffected devotion, we must put away, and pursue with undying hatred. On the other hand, when these movements of love proceed from those whose nature is modest, humble, grave and quiet, then we may believe these motions come from a true intoxication of love."

Generally speaking, we may say that when it is the true spirit of God acting on the soul she will desire to flee from publicity—and with modest reserve and restraint as far as she may guard against any exterior shewing of her inward experience, and if inadvertently and against her will such outward manifestations befall in public, humble herself the more, and desire nothing except that all such favours should be hidden from the sight of men, as too precious and too intimate for their beholding.

CHAPTER XV

THE MYSTICAL SLEEP OF LOVE

At certain times when the lovers are together they remain in a state of tranquil joy produced by their being in each other's presence : they are heedless of all that is passing around them, without movement, without speech, without thought, only reposing with inexpressible satisfaction in their common love, in a state like to sleep; hours pass them unheeded while they thus rest in the bliss of love.

Yet during this time, although they are thus without external movement or action of any kind, their love is growing, for love feeds on love and increases with surprising rapidity during these very hours which seem to pass so unheedingly. It is a state of mental sleep, for the eyes see without seeing, and the ears hear without hearing, and the imagination, the memory and intellectual thought are all still, their whole being without life or movement, and yet reposing in a sweet, restful slumber of undisturbed happiness—the sleep of love.

Just as there is a natural sleep of love, so there is a *supernatural mystical sleep of love*, in which the soul sleeps with a sweet undisturbed happiness, resting in the Arms of her Divine Lover, without thought, without reflection, without observation through the bodily senses, although the eyes behold unseeingly what is passing around, and the ears hear without heeding or understanding the sense of what is spoken, the memory and imagination are

empty of all images; there is a complete cessation of all corporal and mental operation, in the same manner as in natural sleep. The joy of the presence of her Lover and the sense of His Love overcome all her faculties, and the soul rests on the Heart of her Divine Lover with supreme happiness and supreme content: hours may pass in this way and she be heedless of their passing, so completely is she held fast by the unalloyed bliss of love.

Richard of St. Victor describes this state by comparing it with the natural sleep of the body: "What natural sleep produces in the exterior man this mystic sleep of love does in the interior man. Corporal sleep overcomes all the bodily senses; takes away the office of the eyes, the ears and those of all the other senses and members. Just as corporal sleep overcomes all the senses of the body, so does this sleep of the interior man overcome all the senses of the mind. For it absorbs the thought, imagination, reason, memory, understanding, and as the Apostle says, overcomes every sense. In this sleep the soul is taken in the arms of her Divine Lover and reposes on His Heart."

Alvarez de Paz adds that this sleep is sometimes spoken of as a mystic death: "Like sleep, it is a certain image of death, in which the soul dies more perfectly to the world and forgets all visible things."

This mystical sleep is frequently experienced by the soul who has already entered on the way of interior recollection (the first permanent state of mystic prayer), and, like the first stirrings of love, she can neither obtain nor hinder its coming, she has nothing to do here, but, when called by the Divine Lover to this restful repose, leave herself entirely in His hands.

There is a clearly-marked distinction between this mystic sleep and the forgetfulness of outward things that arises when the soul is exceeding

wrapped in prayer, as often happens when she has entered the state of recollection, for then her forgetfulness of outward things arises from the intense concentration of her mind on what she sees in the supernatural light infused within her; although when she returns to herself after such experiences she appears as if she has awakened from sleep; yet it is not really so, while in the case of true mystical sleep all her senses exterior and interior have perceived nothing and she has merely slept in the sweet happiness of love.

Alvarez de Paz exclaims: "O blessed sleep indeed, in which the soul receives fresh access of strength for labouring, when the Lord Himself so carefully watches her."

The effect of true mystic sleep bears new strength to the soul in the same way as natural sleep to the body, and when it is past she finds herself with increased power of loving Him who grows ever more dear and precious to her. Of this sleep it is said: "I sleep but my heart watcheth."

When these hours of sleep are past they leave the soul refreshed, strengthened in the fervour of her love, and prompt and eager to do the Will of her Lover in all things.

The soul may be deceived either through this sleep having a purely natural origin, or through the work of the Devil; the after-effects will clearly indicate its origin: for then the soul remains cold and disinclined to spiritual things, slow and unwilling to embrace the work of self-immolation; the will unready for action, the mind more or less overclouded and inactive, very much like those who after excessive sleeping are unable to arouse themselves.

Just as healthy, natural sleep when it has passed leaves the body refreshed and ready for labour, so also when the soul has come forth from the true

mystical sleep of love, she comes forth with renewed strength for labouring and suffering, with eager zeal and longing to please her Lover in all things; her intellect is alert and quick to heed the least whisper of His Voice, and love within her burns more intensely and urges her onward along the path of sacrifice and self-crucifixion.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THIRST AND TORMENT OF LOVE

Although the lovers are not always together, yet they are never absent in mind from each other, and they look forward with eager longing to their meeting again; indeed, as their love gathers strength, every separation is agony and torture to them; the hours pass by on leaden wings, and their eager longing for each other's presence produces within them such a burning thirst that this overflows into the body and often raises their temperature. That is the effect of real love operating in its depth and strength.

As the moment of meeting approaches this heat increases, and there come those sharp stabs of pain at the heart, strangely piercing, caused by the very nearness of their reunion: the last minutes of waiting seem interminable, and the burning longing and state of pain grow in intensity as the moments speed by.

With what ardent longing do they await that day when they shall dwell together for evermore, and these separations which shadow all their reunions be past.

How they strive in every possible way to become perfectly pleasing to each other; what agonies of pain when they discover that even inadvertently something has been said or done which has wounded their love; how ruthless and unsparing they are to themselves in rooting out every trait and habit that they know displeases; how they strive in every way to have only one single heart and will

in all things; how each anticipates the least wish of the other, and how sensitive they become as their love progresses, to the smallest matter that casts a shadow upon it.

And their marriage day! With what impulsive eagerness they reach forward to it as the consummation of all their desires; how constantly it fills their thoughts, whether together or separate; the nearer it approaches the more that burning thirst for it increases, and those last days of anticipation become a very martyrdom to them.

Merely natural love does all that, sets the fire burning and stabs the heart with piercing anguish, until it reaches its consummation. Of course that only applies to a love that is real, deep and true, and *such a love comes only once in a lifetime.*

But, fierce and overmastering as is the burning heat and acute stabs of pain which natural love produces, it is only the shadow of what the soul in love with Jesus experiences in the supernatural order, for there love is experienced in the full tide of its plenitude and perfection.

Every experience of natural love has its counterpart in the supernatural order; so there is the *burning thirst of love*, and the *agony of Love* caused by the stabs of pain, only in a degree far more intense than anything that can be experienced in the merely natural world.

The soul as she comes to the later stages of her mystical experience is consumed by a burning thirst for the abiding presence of her Lover, which can never be finally quenched until she comes to her Mystic Marriage; but that day is not yet; before its longed-for dawn she must come to such a union of her will with her Lover that her every wish and desire become His, and His becomes hers; by this union her love becomes inflamed with more eager desire, and she reaches at length the days of her

Espousals, days so full of joy that she seems almost already to taste of the joy that is to be, but even so the burning fire within her urges her onward until the day dawns splendid and magnificent when the Bride goes forth to her marriage with the Eternal Bridegroom.

The fire of this burning thirst within her grows in strength the more she advances towards the union of her will with that of her Lover; just as every meeting between the lovers only increases the fire burning within them, so it is with the soul, each meeting with her Love only inflames her and causes a greater thirst for the everlasting union. Every new gift, every new grace is as fuel to this flame. Those stabs of pain, so sweetly piercing that heart and senses seem to fail at their touch, are the evidence that she is drawing to union with her Jesus. They become more acute and more overpowering in their effects as the days pass, and the burning thirst which is consuming her causes the body to share in its burning; it, too, becomes parched and burns with the heat overflowing into it from the spirit; sometimes the temperature rises so high as to threaten death, yet death does not come. This is the action of that burning love which has been gathering in strength with each new touch of the Divine Lover.

Lopez Ezquerra points out very clearly the state of the soul at this crucial period of her career; he shows how this intense affection and longing for God produce a parching thirst in the soul that cannot be quenched, for it only becomes greater the more she tastes of the Divine Love; through the impetuosity of her spirit she even suffers the pangs of sensible thirst in the body, although often this suffering is wholly within; when this thirst is constant he names it the *thirst of love*, while, when it is marked by those sharp stabs of excruciating

anguish he calls it the *agony of Love.* "This thirst," he continues, "is increased like natural thirst in those suffering from dropsy by drinking; from the frequent partaking of the torrent of pleasure, which gladdens the City of God, united to the fervent ardour of love, the soul is interiorly set on fire, and the burning she experiences in the spirit overflows into the body."

Richard of St. Victor says: "Nothing can satisfy the soul save One, she desires nothing save One, One alone she loves, in One alone delights, cleaves only to One, and sighs only after One. She burns only in this One, rests only in this One, in this One alone is she refreshed, in One alone fully satisfied; nothing is sweet, nothing savoury to her unless made so by Him. Whatsoever beside Him is offered and brought to her is speedily rejected and cast away. Who shall describe this tyranny of love? It drives out every desire, excludes every study, violently arrests every exercise that He, her only-desired, does not desire. Whatever is said and thought seems useless and unbearable except it bring her to Him for Whom she languishes with love, without Him her soul is desolate, her body fails, her heart becomes feeble. She will accept no consolation, and only sings with the Bride: 'Speak to my Love that I die of love.'"

The fire of this impatient longing after perfect oneness with the Divine Lover cries out to Him: "O Love, all the longing of my heart is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee."

There is no remedy for this burning thirst, no arresting of these stabs of pain; only her entry on her life of union can bring her some alleviation: even then her relief will be but partial, for the burning thirst will continue, although the piercing heart-stabs of pain will cease; it is only when she reaches love's final triumph and enters on her

married life with the Son of God that the tormenting agony of her burning thirst shall finally cease.

Even during the joyous days of her betrothal, when her relations with the Bridegroom have become so very close, she will still thirst ardently for the coming of her great day, but without the violent impetus that marks her suffering before her will has been brought to union with the Divine Lover.

And the pain of this burning becomes fiercer as she perceives the many little defects that even yet rise up as obstacles to her union; she burns with a relentless hatred against herself for every small fault that she beholds, and hates and loathes herself, and is ruthless in her treatment of her body and her senses. Every weakness is remorselessly punished, and there is sometimes a danger of the soul going beyond her strength in pursuing her body with such unsparing severity. Excessive penances and mortifications beyond what the frail flesh will bear may sometimes only retard instead of help the fulfilment of her desire.

She is fiercely hot against herself, and wages a relentless war against every resistance of her nature to the action of Grace.

Even in these days there are some generous souls who are thus in danger of going beyond themselves in the excess of their fiery love, but the danger is far less than in any former age; but here we speak of those souls who really are generous, whose spiritual experience and burning thirst for their Love is no fancy, but a stern reality. Such a soul is so pierced with grief at the least infidelity or unfaithfulness, at any word, or thought or act that has hurt her Love, that no penance she can inflict on herself seems too great, so ardently does she love.

The almost unbearable weariness with herself, her defects and failings towards her Love, which

the soul experiences in this state are so great, the flaming of love so intense, that she is in no little danger from the disquiet and the fierce impatience which is stirred within her : here she must strive for perfect conformity of will to the Divine Will, assured that only He can cure all the ills from which she suffers, and trusting herself with entire confidence to Him.

The very ardour of her love and the desire she has to come swiftly to the marriage may lead her sometimes to take ways that may easily become dangerous, for the Devil ever lies in wait to deceive the soul at every turn. Her only safety is in the unsparing mortification of her own will and desires, in resolute embracing of the cross, and a cleaving by bare faith alone to her Love; by this she will escape the snares and delusions of the Devil.

She has a hope, strong and unshakeable, that she shall come to the fulfilment of all her desires, be the way never so long, and the suffering never so great, the greater and fiercer the pain the more surely and confidently she clings to her hope.

Above all, must she turn away from all excessive and inordinate desire for spiritual sweetnesses and delights, for in this burning thirst there is a special peril that the soul should seek relief in this way; and the Devil is always at hand with his false and feigned sweetness to mislead her. Here she must be unsparing in combating any such desires, she must set before herself this one sole desire that the will of her Divine Lover may be perfectly fulfilled in her, if He should grant her sometimes some solace in her pain she must in no wise cling to it, but desire rather to endure the cross, and to suffer for her Love. By renouncing any desire for consolation she will be like her Jesus on the cross, Who refused any relief to the burning thirst that consumed Him. He is her Lover; she must be like Him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE UNION OF LOVE

Time in its passing carries the lovers onwards towards the realization of all their desires; the days of that first wondrous awakening to the fact of their love seem now very far off; so much has happened since then, their knowledge of each other has grown so intimate that love's quick eye can discern even the unspoken words of the lover. They have drunk deep of the draught of love. It has become their whole life, and the existence of the one is bound up in that of the other; if one suffers the other suffers in sympathy. There is a wonderful accord between them, because their wills have grown to unity, for love cannot persist unless this oneness of will between the lovers is realized.

Everything is forsaken that in any way displeases or mars the full tide of their loving communion. Of all things, this union of will is the most essential to their perfect happiness, and with increasing knowledge of each other has come increasing unity, until at length they have reached a stage where the will of one is the will of the other; the desire of one the desire of the other: words are scarcely needed to express their desire; the very eyes speak and answer each other when they have thus come to unity of heart and will. This is the sweet fruit of love and of all the preceding action of love in the hearts of these two. Their outlook on life, their interests, their preferences have all become unified in this wonderful action of love. This union of will makes

them ready for their betrothal, a more intimate accord still, and that brings them to the final crown of all their desires, the perfect union in which they are joined together for life by marriage. That is the perfection of love in the natural order.

The lovers must come to this unification of their hearts and wills before marriage, and if they cannot attain it there is nothing to do but to part, for there can be no hope of married happiness where there is no unity of will and purpose. It can only be a ghastly failure, because true love has no place in it. Where there is true love there is likewise unity.

This is the truth as regards the course of natural love, and it is equally true of the course of supernatural love, of which, after all, it is only a feeble and imperfect reflection.

The soul in love with Jesus, if she is to attain the consummation of that love, must come to perfect unity of heart and will with Him, otherwise the marriage can never take place.

Through all the previous stages of her love-life she has grown in knowledge of Him, and every increase of her knowledge has been marked by a corresponding increase of love; she has realised more and more Who He is with Whom she is in love; the greatness of her destiny, the amazing, overwhelming marvel that the Son of God should condescend to choose her for His Bride; the marks of His Love bestowed upon her ever more abundantly as these days of love have lengthened out have deeply stirred her with the single desire of becoming absolutely one in every wish and desire with Him; she longs for the Marriage, and, longing for the Marriage, longs for that oneing of her will with His that must come before.

The soul of this bride, drawn by the strong compelling bands of love, attains to such a unity with her Jesus that her will becomes His, and she only

wills in so far as He wills. Her human will only operates in accordance with His Divine Will.

When she has attained this unity she regards everything from her Lover's point of view; she sees as He sees, and things that formerly she could not bear she now endures gladly and joyfully, because love makes her to delight only in what pleases her Love. The most extraordinary and unforeseen happening finds her calm and untroubled. Without the will of her Love nothing can befall; in the assurance of it she rests confident and unafraid. Even though she could change the most inconceivable and heart-breaking happening that has befallen her and render her Love an equal praise, she would not do so, even in desire, for the good pleasure of her Jesus is her life and her all.

Such a complete and utter concord of the will of the creature with her Creator, such absolute renunciation of everything, is only possible because the soul is in love, intensely and overmasteringly in love with her Jesus. She has passed the region where she can be disturbed, for she has come to such a wonderful union of love with Love that she not only sees everything with her Lover's seeing, but wills everything with her Lover's willing.

For a moment we must look at the threefold way in which God is united with His creature, in order that we may realize how great and marvellous is this union to which He wills to raise the soul.

"The first manner," says Philip of the Holy Trinity, "is that in which God, by reason of His *immensity* (*immensitas*), is in all things through His essence, presence, and power. Through His essence as giving all things being; through His presence as beholding all things; through His power by which He disposes, orders, and sustains all things; for, as the Apostle says: 'In Him we live and move and have our being'; in this manner He

is so in all things, and penetrates all things that He is much more united, present, and intimate in them than light in air or the soul in the body. This union of the soul with God is general, common to all, and of the natural order.

"The second manner of union of the soul with God is through sanctifying grace, by which she becomes partaker of the Divine Nature. S. Cyril of Alexandria refers to this indwelling habitual grace as *qualitas veluti quaedam divinitatis in nobis insit, et in sanctis habitet ac perpetuo maneat.*

"The third manner of union of the contemplative soul with God is through a certain substantial contact of God with the soul whom she perceives as present and united with her, and this union is perfected when all the spiritual powers of the soul adhere to God in so far as is possible in this present life, the intellect, through continuous, evident knowledge; the will through love, not only of desire, but in a certain fruition and satisfaction."

It is of this third manner of union that Cardinal Vives y Tuto remarks that it is a mean between the veil of Faith and the joy of the heavenly country, and so it is rightly called the fruition of love, as it partakes more of Heaven than of earth.

Just as natural love has three ascending degrees of this state of union, so likewise are there three ascending degrees of union in the supernatural order: first, the soul comes to that simple union of heart and will with the Divine Lover, in which they live together in perfect accord and agreement, rather as one than two; this union results in the soul coming to her Mystic Espousals with the Son of God, which marks relations yet more close and intimate; she experiences all the thrilling joy of the Divine embrace; her espousals make her ready for that perfect union in which love attains its supreme and final triumph.

Philip of the Trinity describes this onward movement of love, and draws out its parallel with natural love: "Just as one who loves a virgin very dearly and chooses her to be his bride, by many acts and precious gifts, by most evident signs of love sweetly draws her to the betrothal that she may be united with him by the marriage bond; as through their mutual union and perfect conformity of will they are already not two but one, they may be conjoined and live together irrevocably; but before this is attained there are many visits, many mutual loving conversations, and then, after their betrothal, the previous signs of love are succeeded by loving kisses and chaste embraces: then the marriage is celebrated, and they are joined together in the highest and most indissoluble union possible on earth. So does Christ the Lord deal with some soul whom He chooses for His bride; after He has granted her many spiritual favours, after He has bestowed many precious gifts of virtues, after He has manifested many signs of His love in the illuminative way, He sweetly allures her to union with Himself, to betrothal and spiritual matrimony; then He leads her in the unitive way as no more two, but one in spirit, that through mutual affection they may live together irrevocably. Many visitations go before, many loving conversations, and when she enters on her spiritual espousals she experiences in the Holy Ghost the sweet embraces and kisses of her Divine Lover: then the spiritual marriage is celebrated, that highest actual fruitive union, that indissoluble joining together as far as it is possible in this life, until it shall be perfectly consummated in the Heavenly Country, in an everlasting union."

Richard of St. Victor, speaking of this same union, says: "See the difference between iron and iron; between iron hot and iron cold, this is like the

difference between soul and soul, between the tepid soul and the soul aflame with the Divine Love. When iron is thrown into the furnace, while it is cold it looks black. But the fire begins to burn, and as it grows hot in the furnace, little by little it loses its blackness, and at last, glowing in the furnace, draws to itself the likeness of fire, until it wholly liquefies, ceases to be itself. So the soul, absorbed by the fire of love and surrounded with heavenly desires, first begins to grow hot, afterwards glows and wholly liquefies, and is altogether changed from her first estate." This illustration of the wood or iron cast into the furnace and becoming one with its burning heat is a favourite one with mystical writers on the union of the soul with God.

This union of the soul with God is wrought in the *intellect* and in the *will*. The *intellectual union* in which the soul knows God is by Faith, and as the intellect cannot apprehend God of itself, as that exceeds all its natural powers, God infuses His supernatural light into the intellect, by which it is enabled to behold Him; it is this inability of the intellect to receive the light shining upon it that causes ecstasy before the soul has entered the path of union, because ecstasy is not a supernatural light, but the effect of it. "*Intellectus humanus dicitur unitus intellectui Divino, cum intellectus humanus proportionabiliter Deum cognoscit eo modo quo ipse Deum se ipsum cognoscit.* The human intellect is said to be united to the Divine intellect when the human intellect *proportionally* knows God in that way in which God knows Himself." That is how Lopez Ezquerra describes the mystical union as far as it concerns the intellect. How wonderful is this infusion of Divine Light in the soul, since, as far as she is capable, she beholds God as He sees Himself; it is an anticipation of the full beatitude of the face to face vision in Heaven itself, and this

beholding is always increasing as the soul grows in the strength and virtue of her unitive life. St. Catherine of Siena exclaims: "Thou art that Light above all light, which giveth a supernatural light to the eye of the understanding in such perfection and abundance that even the light of faith is made more clear by it. In the which faith I see that my soul hath life, and in this light it receiveth Thee that art the Light; for in the light of faith I get the wisdom in the wisdom of the Word Thy Son. In this light of faith I am made constant and strong to hold out. This light teacheth me the way by which I must walk; without this light I should be in darkness. Truly this light is a sea which doth feed the soul in Thee, the quiet, calm sea, until she be wholly in Thee . . . for I knew not Thy truth, therefore I loved it not. Wherefore did I not know Thee? Because I saw Thee not. And wherefore did I not see Thee with the light of Thy most holy and glorious faith? Because the mist of self-love had dimmed the eye of my understanding. But Thou, O Everlasting Truth, hast with Thy Light dissolved my darkness."

In this light the soul sees and knows God, "in Thy light shall we see light," and, seeing and knowing Him, is quickened with the fire of love: for there can be no love where there is no knowledge, and there is no knowledge without light. Just as in the natural world there can be no love unless the one loved is first beheld, so is it supernaturally.

The soul's life from that first moment when the true Light shone within her and she was instantly stirred to love has been a life of looking and loving; and the more she looks the more she loves, for each beholding of God increases the burning of her love towards Him.

God is Light and God is Love, and so as there is

a union of intellect in the Light of God there is a union of the will in the love of God.

As the light joins the intellect to God, love joins the will to Him. *Unio voluntatis consisit in conformitate et similitudine voluntatis creatae cum voluntate Divina.* The union of the will consists in the conformity and likeness of the created will with the Divine Will.

The human will is united to the Divine Will when it not merely loves God alone, but also loves Him on account of the same end as that for which God loves Himself. Love unites the will of the lover to the will of her Love in such a manner that the operation of the human will and the Divine Will are always alike; there is a complete concord between them.

The very love burning in the soul towards the Divine Lover is infused by Him; indeed, it is His Love in the soul, flowing in from Him and back to Him, and in this inflow and outflow of love she rests in most sweet content, for all this is wrought in her by God without any effort upon her part, save the passive one of not opposing His designs; she rests with unutterable sweetness, supreme happiness, and perfect content in her Lover's arms, pleased for Him to do what He wills in her.

This state of loving union is both habitual and actual; her habitual state is one of entire conformity to the will of her Love in all things, and is like that of the souls in Heaven. "The saints in Heaven will nothing but what our Lord will show them, and their love and desire is ruled after the will of God, and thus ought we that our wills may be like theirs. Then shall we nothing will nor desire but the will of our Lord, like as they do, for we be all one in God's meaning."

And this union of will with her Lover's, concerns all that happens within the soul and all that befalls

her from without. In all she rests with confiding love in His ordering and disposition of things; if she suffers heat or cold, hunger or thirst, or pain of body she wills to suffer it, and suffers it gladly because He wills it so; if she suffer in soul, she wills it likewise, she desires no ease and no relief for herself, either in body or in spirit. Within and without her habitual state is such that before, during, and after every happening she desires nothing other than the perfect fulfilment of His will in her.

Then there is the *actual union*, those moments when the light and love flowing in upon her are so strong that during the time of this actual union all the powers are suspended, the intellect ceases to reflect and reason, the will is quiescent, the imagination altogether void. Philip of the Holy Trinity says that this divine grace and sublime favour is such that God is perceived by internal touch and embrace and in a manner is touched by the soul, and immense treasures of grace are thus communicated to her.

That the soul has attained this state of union is marked through the effects produced in her, especially by means of those actual graces of union which occur so frequently after she has entered on the unitive way. The soul is filled with an immense joy, at times so great and overwhelming that the heart within her seems to melt on account of the inexpressible sweetness she is experiencing; even the body shares in this joy and the very beating of the heart is quickened by it.

Then the soul is stirred by a most exquisite and tender devotion, so sweet and so moving that she sheds tears, not only interiorly but often exteriorly through the overflowing of this loving devotion into the body. For it is not only sorrow but joy that brings forth tears; the tears stirred by joy are as surpassingly sweet and consoling as those of

sorrow are bitter and desolating. It is the very intensity of her love overpowering her with its affectionate tenderness that finds this way of expressing itself in tears of joy.

One of the most evident effects of this state of union and especially of those graces of actual union is seen in the strengthening of her will to endure and suffer for God. She is flaming with the ardent desire to be joined to her Lover, not alone in the splendour of His Divinity, but also to share with Him in His suffering life; her Lover is God—yes: but also He of the great red wounds, the pierced side and thorn-crowned Head. She is in love with Him, and love makes likeness. She loves Him with such a strong burning love that suffering, pain and death appear the most delightful and desirable things to her; she says with the Apostle: "I will glory in nothing save the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ." This seems to her supreme happiness, to be formed to the likeness of her Lover, suffering and agonising and dying. She is in love, and her love is fierce, intense, overmastering: her Lover suffers, she will suffer; her Lover agonises, she will agonise; her Lover dies and she will die. His interests are hers: no pain, no labour, no suffering can be too great, that she may repay love with love. And she not only desires to suffer, but when the suffering comes she embraces it with joyful exultation. Now, she says, I really begin to love, now I begin to be united to my Love, now we share our pains together; and this to her is perfect joy.

This love of Jesus finds also its expression in love of the neighbour: for love of Jesus and love of the neighbour are one. The soul sees Jesus in the neighbour, and so all she bears and suffers and does for the good of the neighbour is done to her Lover. "God," said St. Angela of Foligno, "having given me the aforesaid Grace, I was

assured my heart would always be in the Heart of God and in His Will, and the Will of God and His Heart in my heart."

See this burning love for the neighbour as it comes from the dying lips of St. Catherine of Siena: "I do put my life and my death, and all in the hands of my dear and everlasting Spouse. If He think it expedient for any creature of His that I tarry here still in labour and pain, I am right well contented and glad, for the honour of His Name and the edifying of my neighbour to suffer, if it be possible, a hundred deaths and martyrdoms in a day. But if it be His will and pleasure that I shall pass at this time and in these torments, be you well assured that I have at length, with loving and instant suit, obtained at His hands a very special grace, which is that it should please Him to accept my body a sacrifice and burnt offering for the refreshing of His Church."

It is this burning of love reaching out from the soul over all the world and embracing in its reach every creature that God has made, that is one of the most evident proofs of the soul's union with God.

And she would praise her Love and draw all others to praise and love Him too. This praise rises ceaselessly from her heart as she recalls all she has seen of Him in the wonderful Light bestowed on her in her actual union with Him. She would that every soul on the earth might know, love and praise Him as she does. She would that her song of praise, rising from joyful lips, might never cease, and the more fully she comes to know Him, the more she longs to praise Him.

Through the inflowing of this Light and Love her whole nature receives such access of strength that she overcomes herself to a most marvellous degree and grows in strength and virtue not only within but without. Things that seemed beyond

her strength are now wrought with astonishing facility.

That she is indeed the new creation in Christ Jesus, that the great change in her life has really come is most evidently manifested by the calmness and courage with which she faces pain, suffering, and disappointment; by the patience with which she endures injuries; by her confident assurance in the most adverse circumstances and under the most painful trials. None of these things move her; the fiercer the storm and the greater the suffering, the more triumphantly her joyful confidence rides over it all. The life she now lives she lives not in her own strength, but in the power of the Son of God Who has chosen her for His Bride.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TOUCH OF LOVE

The mere touch or contact of one body with another may produce no impression, as two stones falling against each other; on the other hand, the contact of fire with wax produces an immediate effect in the melting of the wax.

It is the same with the contact between individuals; the hands of two who meet may touch each other with the same lifelessness and produce as little impression as the coming together of two stones : but let the two hands joined be those of two lovers, and how they thrill responsive to that touch. Why, says the one destitute of all experience of love, should there be such a sweet pleasure in the touch of the hand? Well, only love can answer that, as only love perceives it. There had been a time when the hands of those very two joined, and there was no more impression made by the joining than that of the joining together of two stones; then came love; and they who had been nothing to each other beyond bare existence became everything to each other; their souls thrilled as their hands joined, solely because they loved.

There is in the experience of supernatural love, a touch too, indescribably thrilling and causing the soul to quiver with joy—it is *the touch of God.*

That touch is only perceived by the soul in love with Him; crowds pressed around and touched Jesus on earth, yet only one drew virtue from Him, because she touched with loving faith, not His hand

but only the hem of His garment. The thrilling sweetness of the touch of God is only perceptible to the Lover.

This touch of God is described by Scaramelli as consisting in real spiritual sensation, by which the soul perceives herself in her inmost depths touched by God, and is filled with great delectation. "In this touch the soul not only comes to God through the act of faith illuminated by the Gift of Wisdom, but also touches Him in act spiritually and experimentally . . . The soul in a spiritual manner is able to hear, see, taste and touch spiritual objects . . . Just as one body touches or is touched by another body, thus that it perceives its presence with pleasure; so likewise the soul touching or being touched by a spiritual substance thus perceives its presence in the act of the pure spirit; and with exceeding great pleasure, if the substance touching her be God Himself."

St. John of the Cross, speaking of these substantial touches, says: "God immediately and *per se* touches the substance of the soul, from which contact and divine approximation the soul is rendered exceedingly rich in virtue, capacity and fortitude. They are said to be effected in the substance and essence of the soul, because they are so intense, profound and intimate that they appear not to touch the will in which they are affected. . . .

"Even if these touches of God in this life are not those of eternal glory, they fructify in perfection, and that touch when it is wrought by God savours and is redolent of Eternal Life. Thus in a most admirable participation the soul tastes all divine things, and has communicated to her strength, wisdom, love, beauty and goodness. Since it is God Who works all this she in one supreme touch in a certain manner tastes all."

So greatly do they enrich the soul, that not alone

is one of them able to take away at a single stroke imperfections that the soul herself had been unable to eradicate in her whole life, but also to fill her with Divine gifts and virtues.

These touches are so sweet, pouring forth in the inmost depths of the soul such sweetness, that she considers a single one of them an abundant remuneration for all the labours and sorrows of her life, however numberless they may have been. They bestow upon her such greatness of soul, such ardent longing to suffer much for God, that though oftentimes afflicted, she counts it little and scarcely observes that she suffers."

These wonderful touches in the inmost soul come quickly and are quickly gone, like the touch of the hand in the natural order.

Such great sweetness of love do they in their brief passage produce in the soul that she feels as if she must die from the intensity of pleasure and delight which they excite.

Philip of the Trinity says: "This touch can be taken in the active and in the passive sense. Taken actively the touch implies the action of God intimately touching the soul. Taken passively the touch imprints the immediate effect of this intimate action in the soul, that most sweet sense in the soul caused by the action."

God may bestow this grace at any time and by any means. She has nothing to do in this case except to dispose herself humbly to receive without resistance the Divine action. As she cannot by any effort of her own produce such an effect within her, neither can she resist it, nor is she in any danger of deception, for it is only God Himself Who can thus act on the soul in her inmost depths.

Just as natural love expresses itself by the touch and stirs up a love responsive to it, so in this supernatural love, this touch of Infinite Love in the deep

of the soul awakes an answering love; the soul is transported with joy and at this touch by her Divine Lover she is thrilled through and through by His nearness to her.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ECSTASY OF LOVE

Love is not only the most wonderful, but also the most surprising thing in the world.

In its manifold operations and varied manifestations there is always the element of surprise.

Just as it is impossible to forecast when, where and to whom it will come, so likewise when it has come is it impossible to foresee the course it will follow, or the mode in which at particular times and under special conditions it will show itself; one thing alone is sure and certain: love will always find a way of expressing its presence.

The state of Love is a permanent one, the constant direction of heart and will to one single person; the expressions of love are the passing acts by which its strong deep reality shows itself, and endeavours to manifest something of its character.

The lovers drawn together by the burning of their love to a common unity of heart and will, so love each other, that whatever occurs to one of them as attractive or desirable is regarded only in so far as it will be pleasing to the other; each strives to anticipate even the unspoken desire of the other.

At times, this love in its impetuous onward course surges in upon the lover with such irresistible force that, overwhelming the soul, it carries her entirely out of herself; her exterior senses cease to act; mind, imagination, heart, will, all as it were stand still until this flood-tide of love subsides and she returns to herself again.

This may occur even in the absence of the one loved, when the sense of love so concentrates her whole being on her lover, with such overpowering strength, that she becomes as one dead, unconscious of time and place, only conscious of this impulsion of love, which has thus bereft her of her senses. Or it occurs when they are together, the soul of the one being held in beholding the other with such an adoration of love that she can neither move, reason, nor speak. She simply looks and looks, and love overwhelms her in the looking. Or the lovers meet after long separation, and the ecstatic joy of that meeting is so great that the tongue is deprived of speech, the ears of hearing, and the eyes of seeing, the mind ceases to think, the heart almost stops beating, so great is the burning of love within them and so supremely exultant their joy. The joy of their reunion is such that they have been carried out of themselves and sometimes so intense is the love experienced that the one falls senseless at the feet of the other: the joy of that meeting is too great for the bodily senses to bear it.

That is natural love, and such manifestations experienced again and again prove the truth of that old-time saying of Dionysius *Amor extasim facit.*

If merely natural love can work in such wise on the soul of the lover, what may we not expect when that love is supernatural and the Lover who thus acts on the soul is God?

The soul in love with God experiences in a degree vastly more real and intense all that natural love experiences; she, too, lives in her state of love, and has her acts of love by which the burning of that love finds a way to manifest itself.

The overwhelming of the senses and the consequent arrest in the operations of the outward senses and the interior powers of the soul, is not in itself a grace, but the effect of the Immense Light and

Love which come in upon her in a degree so intense that she cannot contain them; the Light is too overwhelmingly sweet for either the soul's interior powers or her exterior senses.

Within, her reason ceases to work, her imagination is stilled, her memory ceases to operate, her will is quiescent; without, all her exterior faculties of seeing, hearing and the like, are stayed in their course; she becomes as one dead in the presence of the Light and the power of Love.

The Light draws her up out of herself after itself, she sees in that light her Lover, and as she beholds Him, her love surges up in responsive flood, so inconceivably sweet and thrilling that all her senses fail her.

Richard of St. Victor and Vallgornera point out in almost identical words the three causes of this ecstasy of love. In the one case the magnitude of devotion; in another the magnitude of admiration, and in the third case the magnitude of exultant joy are such that the mind is arrested, elevated above itself and carried out of itself by the excess of love that overpowers it.

The human soul is carried out of herself by the *magnitude of devotion* when she is inflamed by so great a fire of heavenly desire that this flame of love increasing beyond any human mode she is as it were consumed and transformed by it and ascends above herself in this immensity of love; she has become like the wax of the burning candle which melted by the flame ascends on high as smoke.

Again, the human soul is led out of herself and above herself by the *magnitude of admiration.* When, irradiated by the Divine Light, suspended in wondering admiration before that supreme beauty she is stricken with such a stupor, she is changed from her ordinary ways of working and

lifted up above herself in the wonder of this Light and its beholding.

The soul is carried beyond herself by the *magnitude of exultant joy* when she drinks of that abundant interior sweetness that springs up within her, intoxicated as it were by it, oblivious of all else is transformed into a state of inexpressible happiness or exultant joy.

In whichever way this ecstatic experience befalls the soul, it always arises through the excess of love which, increasing in the soul to an extent that surpasses all her power of perception, bereaves her of her senses. When that immense tide of devotion is stirred within her, it is love surging up in a flood and striving to find a way to its manifestation, and the soul being yet too weak to bear such incomparable sweetness, it carries her out of herself.

In like manner when the greatness of the Light shining in her intellect overpowers it, it is the love stirred by the beholding that in its fiery intensity finally carries her away. Jesus the Divine Lover is seen in that Light, and the wonder of His Love, the marvel of her being chosen for His Bride, all coming in upon her at once, and love rising up like a fountain within her, she faints with the joy and sweetness of it.

And the extraordinary joyous exultation that carries her out of her senses is once again love; she loves so ardently that she becomes intoxicated with its inexpressible sweetness; so great, so altogether beyond all expression is the joy that fills her, that her strength cannot sustain it, she faints from the very excess of her joy, and that excess of joy arises from the excess of her love.

Antony of the Holy Spirit compares the action of love on the soul to fervent heat applied to water, which, boiling up, goes beyond itself; so, he says, the intellect enjoys in this state the highest

contemplation and the will of the highest delectation of love.* *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*—I sleep and my heart watches. She sleeps through the sweet delight of her ecstasy, and her heart, that is her intellect, watches through this high contemplation. Indeed the beholding and the loving can never be separated. Lovers look and love; their loving causes them to look, their looking causes them to love: and so it is with the soul in these moments of her elevation out of and above herself.

She looks at her Divine Lover, and looking, loves.

Love in the natural order, as we have seen, sometimes produces ecstasy, so also does any intensely surprising and altogether unforeseen event, whether extremely gladdening or extremely terrifying. Both the one and the other produce a paralysis of the senses. There is also a false ecstasy, produced by the Devil, who simulates the work of God in order to deceive and delude souls.

When the origin is satanic its nature may be determined by the effects produced in the subject.

When there is a violent dislocation of the bodily members, and the ecstatic can fall into this state at will, and this on frequent occasions in public places, a satanic origin may be suspected.

Then likewise when the ecstatic in this state appears greatly disturbed and troubled in mind, as if another was acting in him and speaking through him, it may well be a case of temporary possession by the evil spirit.

But the most evident mark of the satanic character of the ecstasy is manifested when the ecstatic in the state of ecstasy is persuaded to some act either evil in itself, or although good in itself,

* The imagination has no part in this contemplation, for, as says Vallgonera, when the operation of the intellect is most perfect and most elevated then it no longer depends on the phantasy of the imagination.

for an evil end, and particularly if anything against the Faith of the Holy Roman and Catholic Church is impressed upon him. The devil may begin by impressing good upon the soul, and fidelity to the duties of religion, and then inspire doubts and afterwards direct denial of the dogmatic truth of the Church. He begins as an angel of light and ends by showing himself in his real character. Many are the souls who have been deceived by these false lights, and by turning aside after them have made shipwreck of their faith and perished miserably.

In true ecstasy there are no violent and inordinate contractions and contortions of the body, no disturbance of the mind, but the soul on coming back to herself is in a state of quiet joy and peaceful love.

The true ecstasy arising from the intensity of supernatural love produces effects on the soul which are the sure proof of its Divine origin.

While the ecstasy lasts, the body remains quiescent, as if the soul had vacated it.

When she comes to herself she experiences an increased burning of love towards God, with a most ardent desire to serve Him with all the strength of her being; love inflames her, she is ready to suffer anything to advance the interests of her Divine Lover.

Joined to this there is a more utterly complete contempt of the world, which she despises and values as a thing of naught in the Light of her Divine Lover. Although she yet lives in the world, she is not of it, and ardently awaits the day that shall release her from exile. "My soul is athirst for the living God: when shall I appear in the presence of my God?" She realises her own nothingness, in proportion as she grows in the knowledge of the All-sufficiency of her Divine

Lover, and love produces in her a pain as intense as inexpressibly sweet and delightful. Hence the impressions of Light and Love which she experiences when in the ecstatic state cause no sensation of pride, but only the most profound sense of her unworthiness of the least spark of that love which is outpoured upon her so abundantly. Like St. Rose of Lima, she flames with the desire to suffer, and cries out: "O my Jesus, my Jesus, increase my sufferings, but increase also Thy Divine Love in my soul!"

CHAPTER XX

THE RAPTURE OF LOVE

The lovers progressing in the love-life, with their wills joined together in a common union, not only experience such an inflow of love in their souls that wholly possessed by it they are at times deprived of their senses through the excessive sweetness kindled within them, but also at times are seized with such a sharp, incisive pang of love that with the swiftness of a lightning flash they are carried out of and beyond themselves by the impetuous torrent of their love. This is the rapture of natural love, and differs only from the ecstasy of love in the astounding swiftness and violence of its coming. When a lover is carried away by the ecstasy of love, it is as by an exceeding gentle and sweet motion, while the rapture comes like love's first awakening, unlooked for, and with the swiftness of lightning.

This is what the merely natural rapture of love is like; but there is also a *rapture of supernatural love*, far exceeding it both in the intensity of its action and the speed of its coming.

The soul can never anticipate or regulate its coming, like love's first coming; a moment before and there is no sign, and then in a flash the rapture of love lays hold of her and instantly she is swept out of and beyond herself by love's fiery onset.

Lopez Ezquerra, comparing these two supernatural effects of ecstasy and rapture, says: "Many call ecstasy the flight of the spirit, and rightly so, for just as the wings of the bird lightly beating the

air gently raise her so that she easily passes from one region into another, in like manner the soul in ecstasy, like a noble bird, is lifted up with the greatest sweetness and lightness of movement above her natural mode of action and passes from the sensible region of material forms to the heavenly and spiritual region of the Divine Essence. By others this ecstasy is called rapture, but quite wrongly, because there is a manifest difference between them, as S. Thomas teaches: Ecstasy implies simply a going forth of the soul from herself, according as she is placed outside her proper disposition, while rapture adds to it a certain violence."

Rapture, then, continues Lopez, is a violent movement of the spirit by which suddenly the mind is rapt away, contrary to its own inclination, or beyond its own natural mode of operation.

This clearly demonstrates the difference between rapture and ecstasy, because rapture requires this unforeseen and violent motion of the spirit, while no violent impulse or motion occurs in ecstasy. In rapture the senses suffer from the sudden and violent motion of the spirit. In ecstasy the senses do not suffer, and they are only alienated and overcome through the intimate intensity of the spirit's occupation.

This rapture, therefore, comes often to a soul engaged at some ordinary occupation: then suddenly and without warning comes this unlooked-for motion of the spirit by which she is violently rapt into the Divine presence; she fears and trembles at the swiftness of the change wrought in her, because she appears to be neither in earth nor in heaven, but by the Divine hand to be held suspended in the air, and sometimes not only does the soul thus fear and tremble, but her body is raised a little from the earth through the impetus of the spirit. This unwonted

effect is wrought by the efficacious and living light, one with the burning flame of love, drawing the soul in the swift movement of the spirit to God, like as the magnet attracts the iron to itself.

There is a rapture of a less perfect character, by which the mind, going forth from itself, is drawn away with violence from the external senses and turned to the imaginary vision. This violence is applied not to the will, but to the intellect, the soul thus remaining perfectly at liberty. It is in this manner very often that the first awakening of love occurs in the soul, when she suddenly beholds in this way the Divine Lover, and is set on fire with love and desire of Him at the very beginning of her love-life.

But the rapture of her later experience, when she has already entered upon the life of union, with her Love, is of a far different character: then she is suddenly and violently torn away, not merely from her external senses, but also her interior senses, and elevated to transforming and mystical union of love with God. In this state the soul, through her spiritual intellect, remains, as it were, fixed in God and united to Him by the most pure spiritual love.

This perfect rapture of the soul in God, as the other infused acts of prayer, cannot be prolonged beyond half an hour, as St. Gregory and others teach. By this we mean the highest and most supreme moment of rapture in which all the powers of the soul are united in God, because in an interval the soul can return to herself and be occupied with heavenly visions; then the will ceases from this mystic union and the rapture itself ceases. When afterwards once again by the drawing of the Holy Spirit the powers of the soul are again suspended in God the soul returns to the state of union and rapture.

In this way days and hours may pass in rapture,

but broken by intervals of separation, during which the soul returns to herself.

It is thus that the saints when in the state of perfect rapture have had imaginary visions, for these have occurred in those intervals between one rapture and another when the soul had returned to herself.

This prayer of rapture is far higher than the prayer of recollection and quiet and the prayer of ordinary union, and has effects far more excellent.

In the ordinary prayer of union the soul can resist the spirit, although at times not without difficulty. But in rapture there is no real possibility of resisting; the coming is so unforeseen, so swift, and so vehement that instantly it absorbs and overflows the senses.

Sometimes this happens when the soul, recalling some word which the Lord had spoken, or some grace bestowed upon her, burns with such vehemence that from a spark of love she flames up and is rapt to God as to her Centre, and sometimes with such an impetus that she is lifted from the ground like the Prophet Habacuc when he was caught by the angel and placed in Babylon. In such a case, stricken with fear and rapt in admiration, without consent on her part the soul is drawn away from her senses and placed in the light and fire of love—how, she knows not. Before the advent of this swift motion she may not even have been occupied specially in God, but engaged in some ordinary occupation; hence, when so suddenly laid hold of by this great impetus of love, was quite incapable of resisting it.

As the Devil can produce a false ecstasy, so also he can produce a false rapture; the false is distinguished from the true by the effects wrought in the soul.

When the rapture has a satanic origin the soul is

filled with fear, dread, and a restless unquietness; yet strangely mixed with a self-satisfied estimation of herself and a certain sense of security and complacency. Then, as the soul has experienced no transformation, but only a certain superficial sweetness and love purely sensible and natural, her fear and disquiet only continue to grow and increase.

In true rapture the soul is filled with a calm, tranquil assurance and certitude that she has really been rapt in God, and although at times she may experience a certain fear, it is humble and quiet, and arises solely from her contempt of herself and the vivid realisation of her own utter unworthiness of the favours her Divine Lover has so freely bestowed upon her.

Moreover, as we have shown, in true rapture itself the soul is wholly withdrawn from all sensible forms and images, because it is in this abstraction from all sensible and imaginary forms that true rapture consists.

The soul thus caught up and ravished out of herself by the splendid light, and burning heat of love poured into her without measure by her Divine Lover, can neither describe nor express what has befallen her in the course of this wonderful experience. She can only say that in it she beheld God; but she can find neither words nor means of telling what she has seen, or what the burning of love in those moments has been like.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MYSTIC BETROTHAL

The day which the lovers have awaited with such eager expectancy, the great day of their betrothal, dawns at last; that day in which they shall pledge their love and fidelity to each other, and their love-life enter upon a new and more intimate experience, one in which the signs of their loving affection may become more marked and expressive.

From that far-off moment when they first beheld the love-light shining in the eyes of each other, until now, their love has been growing with the passing of the days; they have come to a likeness with each other, to a common purpose of heart and will, and so with a strong confidence grounded on all their past experience they come with wonderful joy to this moment that shall open out a new phase in their life.

From that day which they have contemplated with such passionate desire as the assured herald of their married state, their whole life becomes bound together in a deeper, stronger, and more intimate union than they have ever experienced before.

It brings them so nigh to those days of wedded happiness to which their eyes have turned with ardent desire, from the first quickening of love in their hearts, when the world and all it contains fell back into nothingness at love's majestic touch, all through the days of ever-growing and ever-increasing love and affection through which they have passed; that the thrilling joy they experience on this

day seems such that even the marriage itself can bring no more.

That is what the day of betrothal is like to lovers in the natural order; what it is in the supernatural order only those who have experience can really tell. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit.

The soul comes to her Mystic Espousals, a moment so inexpressibly and overwhelmingly great, so transcending all conception, that she is rapt out of herself, and in the Spirit when this wonderful act takes place by which the Son of God pledges the plight of His Love to her and she plights hers to Him. It is the sure promise that the days of her Marriage are nigh, that she, although so inconceivably insignificant that she is as though she is not, she shall yet be wedded to Him Who IS.

But her own nothingness is the very ground of the soul's assurance; for she knows she can do nothing by which she can be worthy of this stupendous union by which she is to become God by participation: He is going to do everything in her; every grace and every virtue with which she shall be adorned for the Marriage comes as a gift from Him. Nay, the very love with which she loves Him is His Love in her flowing back to Himself, and so because she can do nothing, she is assured she can do everything—nothing of herself, but everything in Him.

Lopez Ezquerra says there are three spiritual betrothals.

The first betrothal of the soul takes place at the time of baptism, when, through the gift of sanctifying grace, she is made a sharer in the Divine Nature, and receives then those virtues and gifts which are the promise of her future marriage,

together with the precious virtue of innocence and the ring of Faith.

The second betrothal takes place when the soul by her own free act pledges herself to God and His Divine Love and service, and this takes place more especially through embracing the religious or ecclesiastical state.

The third betrothal takes place through the most high communication of God, when He by a special elevation of the mind and the most intense burning of love joins and unites the soul with Himself, and fills her with the most ardent desire of thus being unendingly united to Himself, assuring and promising that she shall come to the mystical married state.

"God," says Scaramelli, "chooses certain souls to become His brides, and in the prayer of rapture celebrates with them their betrothal, and with outward signs, such as are wont to be used in earthly betrothals."

"This passive union is rightly called the betrothal, the kiss and chaste embrace which befits those espoused; nor is there reason why we should abstain from these metaphorical illustrations drawn from earthly love, which the saints, the mystics, and Holy Scripture themselves have used; because while we are men we must speak in a human manner in such a way that we make more evident the divine love; careful yet that the words and concept we use may be as far as possible purified from stain of human corruption. Here everything of which we speak must be spiritually understood; for infinitely distant from the delights of human betrothal are those which the Lord grants in this spiritual betrothal; here it is love with love, and the experiences thus so surpassingly delicate and so exceedingly sweet that they can only be really understood by those to whom God has granted them."

S. Antony of the Holy Spirit says that this betrothal consists in a real union by which Christ Jesus flows into the soul, *in unione reali, quae fit per illapsum Christi in anima*, not in her centre, but in her superior part; not through modes of habit, but through modes of act. Because the union which is bestowed in the betrothal is not altogether perfected through the mode of habit, but is a beginning of that union not yet perfected.

Hence it is that in this mystic betrothal the soul is not wholly transformed into God, but she is only brought to His royal presence and enjoys the sweetness of His embrace; when she knows she is thus close to God and pressed and united to Him in the arms of His Love, she discerns nothing, for all her powers are absorbed and stilled, and she is, as it were, blind and mute and destitute of interior sense in the unutterable joy of the embrace and kiss of God, so that she cannot by any reason understand or comprehend how great and marvellous and immeasurable the good she enjoys.

St. Teresa says when this betrothal is celebrated the soul is rapt out of herself, and destitute of her senses, because if she were able to perceive herself so united and present with the Divine Majesty, so overpowering would it be that her soul would depart from her body.

The soul, returning to herself after that Divine familiarity and loving embrace of God, again and again sighs after that past kiss of the Bridegroom: with the Bride in the Canticle she cries out, "*Osculetur me osculo oris sui*!" Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth. She longs with most ardent desire for that presence and that embrace, and God, beholding the anxiety of the soul, shows His Face and kisses her again and again. He withdraws. And that He may excite yet more her desire He comes again and inflames her with greater desire

and delight in this kiss of His love. In this way many times the Bridegroom comes to the Bride and withdraws from her, putting her love to the proof by His absence, and increasing in her the ardent desire for the experience of His Love, and thrills her with the joy of each fresh coming.

Sometimes the act of betrothal occurs in the senses through external vision; sometimes through imaginary vision, but most frequently through intellectual vision, by spiritual representation. But it always brings with it a most exalted notion of the Heavenly Bridegroom, most ardent love, and a most overmastering desire for Him.

Through this wonderful moment of her betrothal, when the soul has experienced the ecstatic joy of being held fast in the embrace of her Divine Lover, and the unutterable thrill of the Kiss of God, she has become wholly changed, so that she no longer seems to be herself. Her likeness to her Love is increased, because her ordinary life of union has been intensified to a before unimaginable extent.

The delight of those wonderful moments, so inconceivable and inexpressible, have left in her such a vivid realisation of the splendid magnificence and majesty of her Divine Lover, that she would live in and be wholly consumed by love. Love entirely possesses her, her whole being thrills and quivers under its wonderful power; she can but love and love and love.

The more she realises the marvel of what has befallen her, the more she perceives the splendour and infinite Glory of the Bridegroom, the more utterly vile and worthless she esteems herself; one moment she is overwhelmed and overjoyed with the most wonderful love kindled within her towards her Love; the next she is cast down into the measureless deep of her own vileness. And this sense of her absolute worthlessness grows in proportion as her

love of Jesus her Heavenly Bridegroom increases within her.

The world, little as it had power to draw her before, has still less so now, as she returns fresh from the embrace and kiss of God. It is a land of exile, and she bears with the necessities of the body as best she may; whatever she hears or sees, except it be for the glory of her Jesus, has no power to hold her.

Yet outward things are now no distraction to her: when she has work to do she does it, but without being drawn away from the thought of her Lover.

Instead of finding distraction in outward things, those very things help her to burn with greater ardour of love. Whatever the duty that calls her, she is always ready for it, and performs it with wonderful ease and facility, and yet is never disturbed or troubled. There is a perfection of tranquillity in all her words and actions and movements, even exteriorly, that makes it evident she has in very deed been with Jesus.

She burns with fiery zeal for all the interests of her Love; she is ready to bear and suffer anything to advance His cause and draw souls to Him; as her love burns upwards to Him, so it burns outward to her neighbour. She desires that every soul may come and know and love her Jesus as she does. She refuses nothing her Love asks of her.

Within and without she lives in Him and for Him. She is persuaded that neither things past nor to come, neither height nor depth, nor anything in earth and heaven can separate her from Him she loves. Already has she entered on that life that is hidden in Christ with God, which will be perfected when she is wedded to the Son of God in the day of her Mystic Marriage with Him.

CHAPTER XXII

COME TO THE MARRIAGE

Every experience through which the soul has passed has had only one end—her marriage with God. That is the final triumph of love, and the beginning of her wedded state of perfect union with her Divine Lover. From the very first moment when two souls in the natural order fall in love, through every happening, they look forward impatiently to their wedding day as the beginning of their unalloyed happiness and their perfect union. Love may begin, alas, and not continue, because something comes in and divides the lovers; and that is true both naturally and supernaturally.

From the soul's first falling in love with Jesus, she always has her marriage with Him before her as the one end and object of her existence; she longs for that marvellous union with Him she loves, in which alone love finds its perfect consummation; for, wonderful as is the union by marriage in the natural order, it stands at an infinite distance from the perfection of the supernatural union by which the two in love are not merely joined together, but pass into each other and become each other—then, and then only, does love find the full satisfaction of all its desires. Natural love would reach forth to such a union, would attain it if such were possible, but that is reserved for supernatural love alone.

That which love would and cannot attain in the natural order is attained in the supernatural, for there Jesus the Son of God passes into the soul and the soul into Him, and she participates in God's

Own life—because "whosoever is joined to the Lord becomes *one* spirit with Him."

All through the days of first love, and then through the days of growing union, and finally in those last precious days of preparation after her betrothal, has the Divine Lover been adorning the soul with gift upon gift and grace upon grace to prepare her for the Marriage. Jesus has given the soul everything, and taken from the soul everything. He has been taking away, and He has been giving. Everything that should hinder her coming to the marriage He has taken away from her: the taking away has been His work, and her part has been only to let Him take it. And He has been giving; and so now she is adorned as a Bride for the wedding, and she is ready to go forth to be for ever united to the Divine Bridegroom. "Come to the marriage, for all things are ready." Not some things, but all. Nothing is wanting: in these last days of the mystic betrothal every little blemish has been taken from the Bride and every gift and grace bestowed upon her that she may go forth to her oneing with the Eternal Word.

The great fact of this participation of the soul with God so that she shares in His Nature is one so stupendous, so overpowering, that it passes everything that can be conceived, and yet it is the end for every soul that shall be saved.

That is why there is a Purgatory, for not every soul that is to be saved comes to the Marriage in this world. Alas, how great is the number of those who do not! So they must, through the fiery purification of Purgatory, be made ready for the marriage hereafter.

The more the soul grows in love, the more love burns within her, the more ardently she longs for perfect likeness to her Love, and every small thing that stands in the way becomes a torture to her,

because she hears the Voice of her Lover calling, and sees how these things bar the way to union.

The Bridegroom is calling—calling her to the marriage, and the soul is burning with her longing for it; she suffers the agony of the wound of love with which her Love has pierced her, and she cannot rest until she comes to the full perfection of union with Him. For her there is only One—the Divine Lover—and she is consumed with desire to become one with Him, for Him to possess and pass into her, for her to possess and pass into Him. That is the great mystery of the mystic marriage by which God and the soul become one.

Come to the marriage. All things are ready. The Bridegroom is ready. The Bride is ready. That union so marvellous is possible in this world here and now. It is this possibility of coming to the marriage now that is so great a marvel: perhaps to come to such a marriage after millions of years spent in preparation would still be surprisingly wonderful. But the wonder of wonders is that it is possible to come now to the marriage and participate in the Life of God. This is eternal life—eternal life here and now: for here and now the soul is joined to God, one spirit with Him, with all her faculties deified.

So great and so tremendous is the fact that to so many it appears unbelievable—it is just the language of mystical exaggeration; so when they come upon it in the lives of God's Lovers they think it needs a footnote to explain it does not mean what it does mean—but is merely the fevered utterance of some soul whose head had been turned by the extravagance of her love.

No! the footnote is not needed, because, instead of being exaggerated, the description falls far, infinitely far, short of the great reality.

The soul when she is wedded to God has already

entered the everlasting Now—all else fades away; it is the joy unalloyed of the marriage, the possession of God.

To all has the call been given: come to the marriage—everyone. The Divine Lover does not say you must come to the marriage, but He does say "Come! *Veni*"; for He will not compel any to come to the marriage. All who come must be drawn, and drawn by love.

When the soul enters this state, even in this world she is as if in Heaven, for her Heavenly life has begun; it is only for the fulness of its intensity that she awaits eternity—already she possesses God and the foretaste of the joys of Eternity. This *is* eternal life, not it shall be, but it is.

The soul thus participating in God's life becomes God, for God became Man that man might become God. The soul thus united to God lives a common life in this marvellous union. I am the Vine, ye are the branches; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither can ye except ye abide in Me. The life of the vine and the life of the branches is one; the branch lives because partaking of the life of the vine. It is one life, not two. All the full life of the vine flows through the branches and makes them partakers in itself; the branch bears fruit because thus intensely united in one common life with the vine; separated from the vine it can only wither and perish. But abiding in the vine it lives with and in the life of the vine.

So is it with the soul: united to the Divine Lover she lives His Life in all its plenitude and fullness.

Again, the soul in this marvellous marriage becomes like the piece of wood cast into the white heat of a great furnace; the wood at first shows black against the whiteness, then brown, then red, then yellow, and finally glows with the same white

heat as the furnace itself into which it has fallen. All the action in the wood is the action of the fire which has penetrated and entirely possessed it, so only its bulk remains to distinguish it from the fire. It has become part of that white light and fervent heat with which the whole furnace is glowing.

That in part explains at least in feeble and imperfect manner, inconceivably short of the great reality, something of the marvellous effect of the marriage of the soul with the Eternal Word.

This explains those wonders in the lives of God's Lovers which otherwise are inexplicable. When two are married they have all in common : the riches of one become the riches of the other. So it is with the Bride after her marriage to the Bridegroom : all His infinite riches become hers; so she commands and it is done.

The eyes of the Saints—what power is in them ! St. Benedict casts his eyes on the poor man bound before him, and that look causes the ropes to fall off. How piercing the eyes when they look through any disguise and reach reality. Why is it? Because one with God, they see with the eyes of God, speak with the power of God. What they do He does.

Every adornment the soul needs He gives, any blemish He removes and replaces with a sparkling jewel, until the consummation.

Come ! The Bridegroom, Jesus the God-Man, awaits His bride. The bride is ready, she goes forth to meet Him, He comes forth to meet her. She is ready, ready to pass into God.

There are no words by which we can describe the indescribable—that the creature passes into God the Creator—God Who made all things out of naught is taking up the created soul into Himself, and giving her a share in His power and omnipotence.

That glorious and matchless triumph of love is the one and only reason why we have been made—that we might come to the Marriage.

Of all the graces and gifts He has so wonderfully bestowed upon us, this is the most surpassingly wonderful, just as the name of all names the most wonderful is that of the Heavenly Bridegroom, because that expresses in the most moving way the supreme fullness of God's Infinite Love for His creature.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MYSTIC MARRIAGE

How overpowering and varied are the emotions that stir the hearts of the lovers on the greatest day of their lives; how as they go to the wedding they pass through everything as in a dream, and when at last they kneel before the Altar and are joined together in an indissoluble union, the thrilling joy that fills their hearts is such that it is too great for mere words to tell. That day is so crowded with sensation upon sensation of love, wave upon wave of joy, the very joy so exquisite that it becomes a kind of pain, that it is more than they can bear. Indeed, their love has reached a point at which every attempt to realise it is vain. That is the reason why this wonderful day leaves only a vague impression upon the two who have been joined together upon it. There is joy so great that nature cannot hold it, and so it is with them. The great change has come, and, as in a dream, they realise that their love has attained all its desire; no more leave-taking, no more longing for the time to pass when they may come together again; they are together, and together for life; no more separation: henceforth they live two in one flesh.

That is the marriage day of earthly lovers, of course of those who love in deed and truth, whose love has been proved and found worthy of that sacred name.

The day of their marriage has something so sacred and so precious that it can never be effaced

from their memory, be the love and joy of their after life what it may; it is to their married life what the first awakening of love was to their love-life before the marriage. More overpowering, more overwhelming in the transport of intoxicating joy that surges through them, is the sweet consciousness that the day has seen the great transformation, and that henceforth they no longer live two lives, but only one.

But if the day of earthly marriage be supremely joyous and sacred, what shall be said of the Marriage Day of the bride-soul with Jesus Christ the Eternal Word? Only this, that no words can express and no words describe what it is: they are only feeble stammerings by which the soul strives to tell of its wonders; and the telling is really only intelligible to the soul who has experienced the like wonders herself. Every comparison, every description, every illustration falls hopelessly short of the matchless splendour of the magnificent Reality.

Lopez Ezquerra defines, as far as it can be defined, this most wonderful fact. The Mystic Marriage is that most special and most high and sweet contact with God by which the soul in all its powers is sublimely elevated and disposed thus that intimately and wholly united to God in a certain mode it appears to be clothed with Divinity. This state is so wonderful that it can only be compared to that of the Heavenly country. The soul thus adheres to God that, as St. John testifies, she becomes one spirit with Him. St. Teresa describes the nature of the union by this comparison: Like drops of rain falling into the mighty ocean, that are so mixed with the sea that they can never more be distinguished or separated from it.

On a certain Palm Sunday came to St. Rose of Lima this wonderful joy of being thus wedded to the Son of God. By some inadvertence she had

been passed over in the distribution of the palms: thinking this had happened through her own fault, she retired to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, where on her knees with many tears she asked pardon for her fault.

Looking up through her tears, she beheld Our Lady looking down upon her with a smiling countenance, and then, after a gracious glance at her, turned and spoke to her Son, and, as if she had received a favourable answer, bent her eyes again upon the saint. St. Rose, transported with secret joy, raised her eyes to look at the Son of God, Who, looking at her again, caused a torrent of delight to flow into her soul and said to her: "Rose of My Heart, I take thee for My Bride." Enraptured at the honour of this alliance, she prostrated herself at the feet of Jesus, and said to Him: "Lord, behold Thy handmaid; I am too much honoured by the quality of Thy slave, and I bear in my body the indelible marks of a necessary slavery, which make me unworthy of the glorious rank of Thy Bride."

Filled with the thought of her own nothingness she feared illusion, but the Blessed Virgin assured her of its truth. "Rose, beloved of my Son, see to what an excess of glory He has raised thee; by His mercy thou art now truly His Bride."

The truth of this union her Divine Son confirmed by a miracle. That she might always have a sensible mark of her marriage with the Son of God before her eyes, she begged her brother to have a ring made for her; he took the measure for it, and, though he knew nothing of what had passed, told her he would have engraved on it: "Rose of My Heart, I take thee for My Bride." This consoled her much, for she saw God had inspired him to choose these words. On Maundy Thursday she begged the Sacristan to put this precious pledge of love into that part of the Tabernacle where the

Most Adorable Sacrament is enclosed. On Easter Sunday she was much surprised to find the ring on her finger, though she had not asked for it back, and the religious who had placed it in the Tabernacle had not returned it to her. She knew by this miracle that her Divine Lover had communicated to this metal the property of returning to her finger, to manifest to her His ardent desire to be intimately united to her heart; that, as He had become everything to her by this alliance, He must be the sole object of her thoughts and affections.

This mystic marriage begins the mystic married life of the soul with the Eternal Word. The supernatural marriage unites the soul with her Lover in a union which, like natural marriage, is permanent. St. Bernard says: "Perfect conformity weds the soul to the Word. She shows herself through the will loving as she is loved. Therefore, perfectly loving, she is wedded to the Heavenly Bridegroom. . . ."

Lopez Ezquerra tells of the wonders of this marriage. There the soul enjoys the Divine embrace, there she ardently covets the kiss from the mouth of the Bridegroom. Amidst the flames of Divine Love in which she liquefies, she perceives her powers so dilated and extended that in a manner she thinks herself clothed with immensity.

She knows clearly that her will has greater capacity than her intellect; she embraces the whole universal unchangeable good, and her capacity to embrace it grows, and grows greater the more she is immersed in that ocean of Divine Love. Nothing in this mortal life can be compared to this. Nothing higher nor sweeter be conceived. It transcends all explanation and all perception. Then the soul gives her all to the Bridegroom, while He gives His goods to the Bride. Therefore to the perfect felicity of the Bride nothing is wanting except that

the veil of the sanctuary being taken away, she may be embraced by the Bridegroom and see Him face to face. She feels intensely the burden of this body, feels the captivity of this life as if she were in chains, and groans; but she suffers no other sorrow save this. For the rest there is only the affluence of delights, the exuberance of sweetness, and divine favours.

This marriage is the *mystical passive transformation*, the highest grade of contemplation, through which the soul, mystically dead and annihilated, is in God as her centre, the mind intimately united, surrounded on every side with the fire of Divine Love, and so inflamed that she seems to have left herself, and in all her spiritual and also her material powers she perceives extraordinary operations, by which she is only able to consent to God intimately present and giving her a sweet peace of heart and mind, thus that she seems as clothed with Divinity living in God, and as if changed and transformed into Him. This transformation in God which the soul perceives can be but imperfectly expressed by any illustration: yet illustration may help. As the iron retaining its own nature in the fire becomes fire, the air illuminated becomes light, and the iron rubbed by the magnet retaining its nature becomes magnetized, so in this wonderful union the soul is transformed into God.

Alvarez de Paz says of the soul's contemplation in her wedded state: "It is not brief and transient, but long and protracted, for months and years, and until the end of life, although not always in the same intensity," whence it is said to be habitual, because the soul can as often as she will be intensely united and joined to God by sight and affection of love.

This day is indeed for the Bride the beginning of her new life, hidden with Christ in God, for on

this day she passes into Him, so that the Life she lives is no longer her own: henceforth her life, being passed into Him, is hidden in Him. She is the new creature *in* Christ Jesus; the great act of this day, so surpassingly wonderful, has marked the close of that love-life of loving visits and separations, of comings and goings that grew ever more frequent; henceforth she the Bride and He the Bridegroom are so inseparably united that all the acts of the one are the acts of the other, all the riches of one the riches of the other.

The very love with which she loves her Jesus now is not her own love, but His Love in her flowing back to Himself, just as the wood glowing with a white heat in the furnace draws nothing of this heat from itself: the fire with which it burns comes from the furnace, and in the fire it thus glows with fire, and indeed is identified with the fire in which it burns, its shape only remaining. So the soul immersed in this immense sea of the burning fire of Divine Love passes into that fire, and that fire into her, so that she is wholly penetrated by it, and the only action within her is the action of that burning, ever-glowing fire of Love. She becomes love in Love.

All the love flaming within her is the fire of her Divine Bridegroom: she has passed into Him and she burns in Him; every other action within her ceases, and He only works within her.

That makes this day of her Marriage with the Eternal Word so unspeakably magnificent, so transcendently glorious.

This Marriage act most often takes place through spiritual intellectual representation, although more rarely through the external senses, as the imagination, but it is the act which brings the soul into the wedded state.

To St. Catherine of Siena, on the day of her

Mystic Marriage, Jesus said, as He placed the ring on her right hand: "Behold, I here espouse thee to Me, thy Maker and Saviour, in faith which shall continue in thee from this time forth for evermore, without change or alteration until the time come when thou shalt consummate the same with Me in the most perfect and blissful conjunction in the joys of Heaven." There we see the act and the permanent state into which the soul is led by the act.

As in the natural order this day is one in which overpassing emotions and intoxicating joys succeed each other in such swift succession that day is passed as in a dream, so is it, only in a manner infinitely more joyous and gladdening, in this mystic marriage of the soul with God; for the Bride experiences in it such surpassing and thrilling moments of love and joy, and they succeed each other with such surpassing swiftness that she, too, comes through this day as in a dream, but with the sure and confident knowledge that all her longings and all her desires are fulfilled, and that He, her Divine Lover, is hers henceforth and for evermore.

She can say now with the fullest assurance, "He has kissed me with the kiss of His mouth. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me."

CHAPTER XXIV

FIRST FRUITS OF THE MYSTICAL MARRIAGE

As the first fruit of the marriage, the Bride is established in the most perfect love of the Bridegroom; indeed, as says St. Teresa, she is wholly changed into her Love, and, as if already freed from the body, needs nothing besides this Divine fruition of love. And she thus lives in this love without in any way failing in all the necessary duties of her bodily state: she is turned in them all to the Bridegroom; for one of the most marked characteristics of the soul joined to Jesus in this mystic married state is her capacity to perform outward acts and yet never go out into them, or interrupt the flow of her love to her Divine Lover; herein is the difference between the perfect union of her wedded life and that which preceded it, for then outward occupation drew her away and distracted her from Him. Now nothing whatever has power to do so, because His Love wholly penetrates her and she lives wholly in it: she can say in truth in all her works, "My Lover worketh hitherto, and I work," for this transforming union enters into her whole life and being, so that in all things she can say: "I live; yet not I, Christ liveth in me."

Philip of the Trinity, writing of this state, says: "All the effects of every preceding state of prayer are found in this wonderful life of union, but in a degree surpassing all previous experience and to the exclusion of the defects that marked the other states of the love-life.

"The other grades of union were all disposed so as to lead up to this supreme and ultimate end."

When the Bride is in converse with the Bridegroom she is altogether motionless and tranquil, and all the movements experienced in the other states of prayer are wanting in this. She is so occupied in loving and honouring her Lover that she utterly forgets herself, is without thought or care for herself; so little does anything outward touch her that whatever comes cannot touch or disturb her peace.

This most high contract of the Divine Marriage acts outside the will of the receiver, neither can it be doubted that God grants to some souls rightly disposed to live habitually in this state. Because the Divine Bridegroom, most loving and most faithful, once he has given that grace to the soul, does not repent Him, but as oft as the soul desires His embrace immediately gives it to her; therefore this married state is held by all to be permanent, as is confirmed by the words of St. Teresa: just as God has vouchsafed to join creatures so that they cannot separate from each other, so God does not permit the soul to separate from Himself.

Yet even in this union she does not become impeccable, whence she watches and prays in great humility, although St. John of the Cross says that he believes such a soul is confirmed in Grace, and so cannot thereafter fall away.

Lopez Ezquerra places that rapture which is accompanied by *elevation of the body* as one that may be experienced by the soul in the mystic married state.

"To certain souls there sometimes comes divine callings so vehement that they are carried out of their senses and at the same time their bodies are raised in the air, and for a considerable time remain thus suspended, their bodies made so light that, like

very rare air, they are moved and carried about, as happened to Francis, John of the Cross, Teresa, Catherine of Siena, and others. The body remains suspended and raised from the earth without weight, the countenance becomes shining and beautiful, as though burning with fire, so that to the beholder the body appears like crystal."

This elevation is like ecstasy, because from the most profound and high occupation of the soul her senses perceive nothing; it is like rapture, because her powers are rapt in God; but it is distinguished from ecstasy, because in ecstasy the powers are not rapt away violently, nor are the senses wholly impassable, but are suspended through the exceedingly intense absorption of the soul in God; but in this elevation the senses are not only suspended, but wholly impassable and the spirit wholly rapt in God. It is distinguished from rapture, because in rapture the soul is suddenly and violently caught up out of herself, while in this elevation she is gently and slowly rapt out of herself. Rapture is unforeseen and cannot afterwards be known, but elevation is manifestly seen and the soul is able to foresee it; for around the same Divine object in which she was occupied the soul hears in her inmost depth the Voice of her Lover calling, to which the soul endeavours to respond, like a young sparrow not yet possessed of full power of flight makes little efforts to fly and rise, and so doing, and continuing to fly, mounts the air, through which afterwards she can perform the whole flight.

In nature, too, the soul fears and trembles from the sudden motion of the rapture, but in this elevation the soul is neither disturbed, troubled, nor terrified, but is sweetly and gently rapt into God. In rapture often the senses labour and suffer, but in this elevation, on the contrary, it often happens that the body, previously afflicted with infirmity and

pain, through this wonderful elevation is wholly restored to health and strength.

In rapture, through its sudden and violent attack, not only does the body fear and appear as if bereft of reason, but if it is raised a little from the ground by the impetus, immediately falls again, because it does not lose its natural gravity; in this elevation it is raised from the earth by wonderful devotion, and, losing its natural gravity, remains for a considerable time thus suspended in the air.

Again, it differs from both ecstasy and rapture because this elevation only occurs in the perfect soul, completely purified and living in the state of spiritual Matrimony, and although at times rapture and ecstasy may occur in the married state, as they do outside, yet this elevation is never granted except to the soul who has already entered on her wedded life.

As to the cause of this elevation, in agreement with all mystical theologians it must be said that it occurs through the vehement elevation of the spirit into God, so vehement that it carries the body along with it, and keeps it thus elevated, as long as the elevation of spirit continues.

This elevation is a certain participation of the soul in the gifts of Glory, for if in the perfect matrimony of Heaven there flow to those perfected souls from the delight of the Beatific Vision such gifts; it is not unfitting that in the imperfect Matrimony of this life in which the soul is granted the earnest of that secure and perfect Matrimony, through the supernatural light and love by which the soul sees God, these gifts should, although in an imperfect way, overflow into the body.

What shall we say of this experience? Is it a usual and necessary accompaniment of the state of mystical marriage? No, it is extremely rare, granted to few, and by no means a necessary

happening in the state of transforming union : when it occurs it is as if the body shares with the soul in her foretasting of Eternal Life, and so partakes of something of the glory that one day shall be its portion; for the redemption wrought by the Bridegroom on the blood-stained gibbet of the Cross was a perfect redemption, a redemption in which the body as well as the soul has part : for as, says St. Paul, the whole creation travails in pain until now, waiting for the redemption of the body. In the mystic state of this transforming union to certain souls it is given that their bodies, too, for a brief while shall in a limited and imperfect degree enjoy by anticipation a brief participation in one or other of the glorious gifts which the glorified body shall possess in all its plenary fullness in the Heavenly Fatherland.

But the essential effect of the Marriage is this transformation of the Bride into the Bridegroom by love; love, pure love, love inexhaustible, this is the most precious fruit of the Bridal Day for the happy soul that has been called to her marriage with Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

She lives in love, and this love produces in her such supreme tranquillity and peace that external happenings, however heartrending and overwhelming, have no power to touch her; for the peace her Love has bestowed is His Own : she has passed into him so completely that by that passage into Him she is hidden from all the strife of tongues, and perceives all earth's happenings as if a great way off. Her Love and He alone is sufficient for her.

Dwelling in love, she dwells in Him and He in her : thus are these two made perfect in one.

CHAPTER XXV

MY LOVE IS CRUCIFIED

One of the most manifest effects in the soul of the Bride, one that proves without shadow of doubt that she is indeed the wedded Bride of the Word of God, is this: that as she is wedded to His Divine Nature, so is she wedded to His suffering Human Nature. *Amor meus crucifixus est.* My Love is crucified; and she will be crucified with her Love. So Scaramelli writes: "The first and most evident fruit of this marriage is that the soul in her inmost depths is united to Christ crucified." Richard of St. Victor says: "In this supreme state of contemplation the soul has proposed to her this form of the will of Christ, whence it is said to her, thus think within you: this is the form of the humanity of Christ, to this I ought to conform myself with all the strength of my will."

The soul, beholding her Divine Lover, flames not only with love, but with the most ardent desire of likeness. He comes! Her Jesus, her Lover, her Bridegroom, and comes with rent, torn flesh. He comes with His whole Body one red wound. He comes with those great wounds so wide open and so red in His precious hands and feet and side. He comes, and His Face is marred and disfigured by wounds, by blows, by blood. He comes: He is crowned with cruel thorns. He comes, and in what vesture? The Vesture of His Blood. She beholds Him, and sees those eyes, those eyes of God, so inexpressibly tender, so supremely compassionate,

so burning with love, and they, too, are dimmed with blood. This is her Lover, this is her Bridegroom. She is married to Him, and, married to Him, she burns with a passion of love, and a passion to be like Him. Suffering becomes her joy: she would taste all the anguish and horror of His pain, she would be pierced and nailed to the Cross with Him; she will share all His dereliction; she wills to escape nothing of her complete oneing with Him in His sacrificial life. That vision pierces her, melts her, inflames her: she is on fire, blazing with eager longing for suffering; above all, to suffer all the pains and anguish of the Cross.

I am crucified with Christ: that becomes the burden of her cry. I bear always in my body the dying of Jesus: so she wills with the great Apostle to fill up that which was wanting to the passion of Christ, and naught is or can be wanting to the all-sufficing fullness of that passion, save this, that His lovers should be crucified with Him, that they, too, should share in His passion, that the mystic body should suffer with the Head.

So the soul does not seek escape from suffering; she ardently desires it: she will be a Victim in union with her Lover, the supreme Victim. She will go to Calvary, too.

This participation in the suffering Victim life of Jesus is the necessary consequence of her participation in His Divine Life. Jesus—God: yes, all the splendour, might, and majesty of the Divinity—yes. But Jesus-Man, suffering, agonising, tormented, dying. This is her Jesus, this is her Lover. Jesus the God-Man. Not Jesus God—but Jesus also Man. This is the Jesus she has wedded: if she is wedded to Divinity she is also wedded to humanity; for Jesus God and Man is only one personality, and she cannot be joined to Him unless formed to His twofold nature.

And she is conformed to the express image of this suffering-life, not only by desire, but in very deed and truth.

Every occasion of suffering she embraces, not grudgingly, but with great joy; indeed, she so burns with this desire of likeness to her Love that she would not be free from pain and suffering, for when that is wanting she feels something to be wanting in her wedded life.

She is always ready to embrace suffering, in whatever way it comes, and she adds to the sufferings that come to her others of her own, that she may experience in her own body the torment of the Cross.

To the non-lover her ardent longing and eager grasp of suffering are alike unintelligible; her austere penances, the pain she inflicts upon herself, extravagant and exaggerated; painfully disconcerting and confounding to the smug, self-satisfied complacency of the worldly-minded.

But to the lover penance is a necessary part of her life: the crucifixion of her whole nature, not as before in order to conquer it, for that has already been done; but solely from her ardent desire to be one with her Lover in all His pain, something without which she cannot live.

The lovers of Jesus are always the lovers of His Cross, and the Bride-soul united to Him in indissoluble wedlock, like them, can only be happy on the Cross: with St. Paul, she would be always delivered unto death that the death of Jesus might be manifested in her mortal body.

Look at the extraordinary penances of St. Rose of Lima, even in her early years, and you can see how it is that a soul wedded to Jesus always thirsts for sacrifice.

At the age of fifteen she made a vow never to eat meat unless obedience compelled her.

Her fasts were so vigorous that in twenty-four hours she took nothing but a piece of bread and a little water, and those who know the burning heats of South America can imagine what that meant. A moderately-sized loaf and a pitcher of water served her for fifty days. Once she remained for weeks without drinking water; towards the end of her life her fasts became continuous, and sometimes she would pass days at a time without food or drink. And when she took water she generally took it warm, so that she might not taste the pleasure of a draught of cold water.

Her discipline was made of iron chains, and she so disciplined herself each night that her blood sprinkled the wall and formed a pool on the floor. These disciplines she took for seven ends: first, for her own sins; secondly, for souls in the act of sinning; thirdly, for all the needs of Holy Church; fourthly, for her country; fifthly, for the souls in Purgatory; sixthly, for souls in their last agony; and seventhly, in reparation for the outrages against God.

As she practised this penance every night she re-opened her wounds by making new ones, and to prolong the suffering she contrived not to strike always in the same place, but reiterated her blows so frequently that she never allowed her wounds time to close; thus her whole body became almost one wound. Such was the burning ardour of her love for her crucified Jesus.

Often at night she walked about barefoot in the garden, carrying a long, heavy cross on her wounded shoulder, and the joy she felt made her insensible to the effects of air and season.

She bound her arms shoulder to shoulder with thick cords, which caused her great pain by tightly compressing the muscles. In order to suffer more, she rubbed herself with nettles, making her body

one great blister, and with thorns, which entered deeply and drew forth quantities of blood.

She wore two hair shirts, and armed them with a great quantity of points of needles to give herself yet more pain. She made herself, in imitation of her Love, a crown made of pewter, studded with sharp-pointed nails: this she wore for several years, and then replaced it with an iron one, in which she fixed ninety-nine points, which she wore the last ten years of her life. She wore it under her veil, which made it the more painful, as the points, being of unequal length, did not all pierce her head at once, but one after another, according to her different movements, so that by the least motion her head was torn by these spikes.

Her bed was a chest of rough wood, with a quantity of stones of various sizes; she added ten pieces of knotted rope and three hundred pieces of broken tile, so placed that they might wound her body. For fifteen years she slept on this bed of pain, and although she met every pain with intrepid courage she never placed herself on this bed without shuddering, and the very blood seemed to freeze in her veins, so violent was the emotion the inferior part of her nature felt to the pain she was called upon to endure. Jesus approved of her acts, and, appearing one night when she was asleep, said to her: "Remember, child, the bed of the Cross on which I died for thee was harder, narrower, and more painful than that on which thou art lying; think of the gall I drank for thy sake, and call to mind how the nails pierced my hands and feet. Then shall you feel consolation in the terrible pains you suffer on your bed."

To the cowardly and the half-hearted such penances appear in the light of mere fanatical lunacy; to the soul of the lover they are simply love striving to express itself in ardent and loving sacri-

fice: "Those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son." And the Bride-soul, finding the sufferings that come to her are insufficient to satiate her thirst for likeness and union with her crucified love, searches for new ways in which to fasten herself to the Cross.

Father Doyle finds the bed of nettles in which to roll himself, goes forth in the night to spend it in prayer, standing in the water, or rises on the cold winter's night that he may feel the cold with Jesus. His whole life is one long unsparing act of mortifying nature and conforming himself to the image of that Jesus he loved with ardent and passionate devotion. For him to live was Christ, and to die gain.

It is love, and always love, that inspires sacrifice.

Gemma Galgani, flaming with love for her crucified Jesus, desires to be made like Him, and Jesus satisfies her desire. In her short life the chalice of suffering was ever at her lips; her sufferings and anguish increase with the passing of the days, and yet she always desires more; her unsatisfied thirst is always to suffer with her Jesus. And her longing is satisfied to the full. In her own body, like so many other lovers of Jesus, she experiences the sweat of blood, the wound prints in hands, feet, and side, the thorn prints of the crown on her head; but not even here is Love satisfied: she must drink with Him the chalice of dereliction and the black agony of the great forsaking. She experiences the awful loneliness of her Jesus when His Human Nature, out of the awful blackness of Calvary, cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Towards the end of her life He came to her one day and said: "Gemma, will you be My Victim?" He showed her why, he showed her the reason: "desecrated altars." She shivered with horror at

the sight, and was almost bereft of sense; but her loving heart made quick response: "Yes, Jesus, take me for Your Victim!" And He took her at her word. From that time forth there fell upon her a dreadful darkness and appalling desolation; her ecstasies increase, and in them she battles for souls, pleads and suffers and wins their salvation; she is misunderstood, mistrusted, yet holds on her way unflinchingly, and, with wonderful courage, strong, fearless, drains the chalice of her anguish to the dregs. There was in the heart of this mere child a great apostolic heart, or rather the heart of Jesus was in her heart, burning with such a pitiful love for sinners that for their salvation she was always giving back some years of her life. Her prolific correspondence, her immense zeal and tireless penance, it is the burning ardour like to that of St. Paul, who would be anathema that his brethren might be saved. Everything in her life is extraordinary, and the extraordinary is by no means welcome in the very proper religious world of the twentieth century.

The burning love flames up to her Jesus from her suffering heart; she cries to Him to let her yet suffer more; and so she comes to the end, and will die like Jesus, without comfort, alone on the cross. Her spiritual Father in Rome would have sped to help her in her agony, the telegram to call him was already written, but she will not allow herself that consolation, so it is not sent. The final moment comes: sitting upright in her bed, she exclaimed: "Jesus, I can no more!" inclined her head, and died. Thus died a victim of love, the faithful, loving bride of the crucified Son of God.

The soul of the Bride ever seeks fresh ways and means of likeness to her crucified Love.

She suffers heat and cold, and seeks no alleviation from them; she will suffer them with her Jesus.

She pays no heed to her food and drink: whatever it is, she takes it with utter indifference, and if it is unpleasant finds a reason for satisfaction therein. She never seeks ease or bodily comfort, or chooses easy positions for sitting or standing: in all these she seeks that which by giving her pain and discomfort likens her to her Jesus, and she is joyous and happy in all these minor sufferings: they are to her a garden of delights.

Her countenance is not sad, but always joyous, however much she suffers; be her bodily sufferings and her interior sufferings what they may, they have no power to take away her interior peace, or trouble her joyous spirit, but, on the contrary, increase it.

If she is misunderstood by those around, blamed for things she has never so much as thought of, much less done, if her good actions are distorted into something quite other, she pays no heed to it, for her peace is not in tongues of men; she remembers that if her Bridegroom was called Beelzebub, how much rather must she, His Bride, suffer in like manner?

However cruel and biting the words that be spoken, however bitter the sarcasm, however unjust the condemnation, none of these things trouble her peace: she rejoices to be made partaker in the sufferings of her Divine Lover, and she has nothing but kindly looks and loving words for those who revile and slander her. To bitterness she returns sweetness, to harsh words gentle, or is silent and makes as if she had heard them not. Within she is full of love towards those who wound her, and rejoices at each pang she suffers. Never for a moment does she suffer the least root of bitterness to spring up in her heart.

When she suffers incredible anguish in her soul, to which all the outer sufferings are as nothing, she still carries herself joyous through it all.

Nothing is more extraordinary in mystic experience than this existence at the same time in the soul of great anguish and suffering, sometimes in the body only, sometimes in the soul only; sometimes in both; together with the greatest interior tranquillity and peace, and a sweet joy. It is a paradox, and yet it is absolutely true, as the experience of all the lovers of Jesus bears witness. The soul lives this strange double life of blended joy and sorrow, for she is married to the Eternal Word in the strength of His Godhead and the weakness of His Humanity, and she shares in that two-fold life : her tranquil joy does not stay her suffering, nor her suffering cloud her supernatural joy.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BRIDE'S CONFIDENCE

There is another fruit resulting from the marriage of the soul with the Eternal Word : there springs up within her a sweet tranquil peace and assured confidence that nothing can ever shake or disturb. This sure peace and confidence is one of the most precious gifts her Divine Lover has conferred upon her, for it causes her to stand unshaken in the most violent tempests and in the midst of the most seemingly overwhelming disasters. Her Lover is God, and she knows that He is indeed the Eternal King, and that neither the most stupendous happening nor the most insignificant can escape His control, His all-seeing providence, His all-mighty power, His measureless love, His irresistible will rules over all. And as He thus disposes all this in love, so she has the confident assurance that all is well.

She hears her Lover saying : "See, I am God; see, I am in all things; see, I never let my hands off my works, nor ever shall without end. See, I lead everything to the end I ordained it to from without beginning, by the same might, wisdom, and love that I made it with. How should anything be amiss?" Hence no outward happening disturbs the perfect tranquillity of the Bride : she lives hidden in Him, sheltered from all this external strife and disorder, resting secure in loving and joyous confidence on His heart. Like St. Catherine of Siena, she has heard her Lover saying : "Behold, now I

give thee My will, by virtue whereof thou shalt be so strong that, whatsoever shall happen to thee from this time forward, thou shalt never be altered in mind, but shalt continue evermore in one state."

The Bride's peace is deep and profound, existing as a well of living water in the very inmost depths of her soul, from which it wells up and overflows into her exterior nature, by which even her outward appearance always remains calm and peaceful in the midst of the most unforeseen and terrifying circumstances.

The past does not disturb and terrify, for she leaves it all utterly—its weal and woes, its words and works and deeds; howsoever and under whatsoever conditions they may have been wrought, she remits all with loving confidence into the hands of her Divine Lover, wholly possessed by Him. The past has no power to trouble her peace: vain regrets or foolish satisfaction are equally far from her. With sure confidence she rests on His infinite mercy, like little Sister Theresa, who had never lost the innocence of her baptism, and with wonderful confidence said that it was not in this that she confided; for, said she, although I had committed every possible sin, my confidence in His Love would be just the same. The past has gone irrevocably, and she knows nothing can recall or change it.

Neither is she anxious or disturbed about the future: the future will be what her Love wills it to be, and, although yet unseen, she wills it so to be in absolute unison with Him. She does not desire to hasten her Lover's work, nor retard it; she has no desire for one happening more than another, but rests in perfect peace and with content, waiting for the manifestation of His pleasure.

This is one of the sure evidences that the soul is in very truth wedded to the Word and is partaker of His Eternal peace and tranquillity; for those who

have not attained to that transforming union with the Bridegroom are often fearful and anxious for the future. In the fierce tempests that rage against the Church of God, like Ozee they would stretch out their hand to steady the Ark of God, because they lack the unshakeable confidence, the calm, secure assurance, and tranquil peace of the Bride. They are always fearful of those things that are coming upon the earth, easily shaken and disturbed. They enjoy a superficial peace as long as the affairs of the world and the Church go smoothly and their own little world moves more or less to their own liking: but let the tempest rave, the hurricane of war rage, enmity and persecution arise, and their peace is gone: they are filled with fear, as if God was not King and Lord of the universe He has made, and did not hold all things in the hollow of His hand.

How easily, too, is the peace of souls disturbed when a few slighting words are said to them, or work to which they have set their hand fails, or their words and actions are distorted and turned to evil.

But the soul of the Bride remains immovable, no matter what befalls her: bitter words, cruel slanders, unjust condemnation, failure of all the work she has undertaken with a pure intention—none of these things move her; the tranquil peace and sure confidence that she has in her Divine Lover become the more evident the more her sufferings increase: the Lord is her strong rock and her fortress, therefore she shall not be moved.

The future, like the present and the past, is in the sure hands of the Bridegroom: how can anything, then, go amiss?

As a consequence of her complete deliverance from all disquiet about either future or present events, she is able to perform the duties of each moment as they arise, in wonderful peace and entire

confidence; she is not distracted, no matter how many duties crowd upon her, for she lives in the still cloister of her heart with the Divine Lover, and never goes forth utterly to any outward thing. The ease and facility with which she accomplishes the most difficult tasks, seemingly without effort; the way in which she turns from one thing to another when occasion demands it, her sweetness and peace, even when interrupted without need, the readiness with which she gives herself to the call of each one that asks of her; gives the proof that she is in the Bridegroom and He in her, for His peace and His confidence are in all her ways and works.

The Bride is confident in the face of insurpassable difficulties, and when called to the most impossible tasks. Nothing in the Lord's Lovers is more remarkable than their wonderful confidence in moments of overmastering danger and disaster; the assurance of certain victory never left them. The soul called to a work altogether beyond her powers goes forth to it in supreme confidence and assured peace, assured of her own nothingness, but with the most perfect trust in the absolute might of her Lover's strength, sure that although of herself she can do nothing, yet she can do all things because she is in Him.

The Bride when she prays has the assurance that she will be heard, because her Bridegroom is the ground of her beseeching; how, then, shall she not have what she asks? See the great Apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick, what power was in his prayer, and with what confidence he prays. How he spends the nights wrestling in prayer with God, how he pleads on the mount and demands an extraordinary thing, that he in the last day shall judge the people of Erin: and he is heard because of his strong crying and unshakeable confidence. See how, as a young boy captive in that strange land of which he

was destined to be the apostle, he rose before the light to pray on the mountain side, and he says: "The ice, rain, wind, and sleet beat upon me, and I perceived it not, for His Spirit was burning within me."

The Bride, too, is extraordinarily bold in the daring confidence with which she asks what she will from her Love. She asks with a strong confidence like that of Patrick, and as in him so in her, it is the Spirit of the Bridegroom that prays, and so she is granted all her asking.

Her confidence arises from the depth of her peace, for her peace is not her own, but her Lover's. The peace which He has bestowed is not the peace this world can give: this peace can neither be given nor taken away by the world. Only the Eternal Word can give it, and it is only in the soul of the Bride that it rests in all its splendid fullness. Her peace rests on no outward thing. No outward success or failure, joy or sorrow, victory or defeat, praise or blame can touch her tranquil security, because the ground of her peace is none of these. He, the Eternal Word, to Whom she is wedded, He is her Peace.

Her peace rests on a will which is entirely that of her Lover, and never seeks aught of her own in any wise. Her Lover alone is the source of her Love and her joy, and He only is her peace and confidence.

Nothing can ever come nigh her to molest this peace: as only her Lover gave it, He alone has power to take it from her. She rests with strong confiding trust in His Arms, rage the tempest around her never so fiercely. His eyes of love look into hers, and hers into His, and she knows she is safe.

Let the happenings be as confounding as they may, let the storm of persecution rage as it will, let

the tongue shoot out at her bitter words, cruel slanders, and every kind of hate, she remains secure, calm, and confident, nay, more, she rejoices. She hears the reassuring Voice of her Lover within her: "I make all things well, and I can make all things well, and I shall make all things to be well, and thou shalt see thyself that all manner of things shall be well."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BRIDE'S "ABANDON"

Another fruit of the mystic marriage is seen in the perfect "abandon" with which the bride gives herself up to the will of the Bridegroom.

This word "abandon," so expressive in French, is without an equivalent in our English tongue: but it expresses the joyous confiding giving up of all to the will of another in a way so complete that there is not only no struggle, but a joy in the giving. Conformity does not express its meaning: for the will may be conformed to the will of another with an almost super-human effort, because there is nothing else to be done; or there may be a conformity outwardly complete, but inwardly with a certain reservation and wish that the thing might be otherwise, and at least in almost every act of the will in this state there will be some resistance, even if only slight.

But "abandon" goes far beyond that: it is not a conformation, but a *unification* of the will, by which two wills have only one single operation, and not only so, but even the very desires operate in the same way, so that not even a desire is entertained even in passing without at the same time the readiness to have or not to have according to the will of the other.

This unison in the action of wills, which never can be attained by natural love, even in the marriage state, is attained in the supernatural marriage state, because the two who are joined

together have not merely united, but passed into each other.

This fruit of "abandon" is one of the most marked and convincing signs that the soul has really entered this transforming union, for it evidences the fact of the transformation into the Bridegroom.

The Bride's will is one with the Bridegroom's; before His will is known to her she waits with a loving attention, ready to embrace whatever He shall determine. She seeks not merely His will, but the good pleasure of His will; she, as it were, goes before in the very anticipation of His desires in a way that only love knows how.

The pleasure of her Love—that which will please Him most, that which will advance His interests most, this is all her desire, because His interests are hers, and hers are His.

So that her will goes instinctively with her Divine Lover; she has no fears and no forebodings for the future, because the future will all be in accordance with her own will and wishes, because in accordance with His. She is happy with whatever befalls her, with whatever comes to pass in the world around her, for she knows that her Love's will is surely directing all things to their determined end; that as regards herself, she is so loved and treasured by Him, that He loves her with the same love with which He loves Himself. She has heard Him saying: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee." And that drawing of His Love has brought her to her present state of blissful, joyous, willing "abandon" of everything to the good pleasure of His Will. She rests in His arms secure with a sense of indescribable security and happy, confiding content; not the slightest wish comes across her mind, not a passing desire, but that with most absolute and assured confidence she does not confide it to Him. If He sees it to be desirable,

she desires it; if He does not desire it, neither does she.

She is never vehement in her pleadings and prayers when she asks aught of her Love: she asks without any inclination of her own: she merely waits to be moved by Him. Indeed, unless He wills to grant her prayers she cannot ask, strive as she may.

That which He wills to grant, that she asks, and for the rest, she cannot remember for what she has been besought to pray, because it is not His will that she should ask, neither is it His will she should remember.

It is the joyous gladness of this "abandon" that brings such unutterable sweetness and tranquillity to the Bride; she speaks lovingly to the Bridegroom and says: "My Love, You will grant me this because I ask You, and I ask You because You will me to ask, for my will is so Your Will now that I can never will, even in desire and in the smallest matter, anything other than the thing it is Your good pleasure to grant, or other than in the way in which it is Your good pleasure to bring it to pass."

In the presence, then, of sudden and overwhelming disaster, she is not troubled or distressed: this has befallen after the good pleasure of her Love, then shall she seek to have it otherwise? No, she says, my Love will have it so.

The work on which years of toil have been spent, broken and destroyed in a moment—she is undismayed. Her Love willed it to go on these years, and to end just as it has: that is the good pleasure of His Will, and it is hers likewise. She would not change anything of that happening, no, not even were she free to do so, because that is her Lover's pleasure; then that is her pleasure, too.

She awaits with this sweet, joyous "abandon" all the events and happenings within and without

that are as yet hidden in the secret recesses of her Lover's Heart; but whatever they be, whenever and howsoever they come, they will be her good pleasure, her joy, and her happiness.

She cannot be moved, for she is one with Him Who, among all moving things, Himself unmoved abides.

What is the secret of this "abandon"? This: that when she came to the marriage she gave her Lover everything; that giving is part of the marriage contract; and she gave Him everything so utterly and absolutely that when He took that all so complete was that giving that henceforth she possessed no power of choice in things great or small; but He gave her His all, and in that all His best gift of joyous, glad "abandon" to His good pleasure in every chance, change, and circumstance of her life from that moment forth. Thus, wedded to the Eternal Word, He is in her and she in Him, in such wise that their desires, wishes, and will are in operation one single act: true, like the wood in the fire, its proper shape yet remains, so, likewise immersed in this sea of measureless Light and Love, her will remains, but it has no action of its own, only the action of the Divine fire by which it is consumed and penetrated.

So the Bride's prayer is vastly different from the importunate urgency that exclaimed in love's first days: "You must do it. You see it is for the praise and glory of Your Name: You can do no other." Now it has the calm assurance of one who has, as it were, already obtained all her asking, because it is her Love Himself Who asks within her.

She sees the whole creation in God: this is not the same as for her to behold God in the creature; for by this seeing in God she sees in a clear light all things in their true relation and proportion, like as St. Benedict, rapt in the spirit at Monte Cassino,

beheld the whole world in one single ray of light, with all the manifold happenings within it. That is the clear-seeing of the spirit, which, drawing all things to unity, sees them in the pure Light of God. It is through this clear seeing that the Bride always preserves such joyous tranquillity in the midst of events that come as overwhelming and startling shocks to others. Her Lover holds the whole universe in thrall, and this happening, so stupendous and so colossal, is all part of His Will: without Him it could not be. And love sees with a clearness that only love can, the purpose of Eternal Love. While those around cry out and exclaim: "How can you reconcile this happening with the Love, Goodness, and Kindness of the All-Wise, All-Loving God?" she remains perfectly tranquil, unmoved and unafraid. All that is amiss is their wrong-seeing, and to the Bride's right-seeing all is well, because she beholds all in the clear Light of His supernal Love. With the same trust that only Love can know, she is assured that every single event that has or is or shall be is well, that her Bridegroom, the Eternal Word, Who all things made and keeps in being, will bring all things to their perfect consummation.

Whatever comes, and whatever goes, whatever rises, whatever falls, whatever succeeds, and whatever fails, it is all part of the Will of my Love, and in the clear light of His seeing and the sure strength of His loving, I rest and am glad. All the things that seem so utterly beyond comprehension and reconciliation become understandable in the clear light of God's Love. Love unfolds all mysteries and reveals all secrets, even the deep things of God.

Thus the Bride bears persecutions, labours, sufferings of body, sufferings of soul, everything that befalls her, with incomparable joy; for her joy

is in the will and good pleasure of her Divine Lover, and in that alone. He has bestowed upon her something of His Own power, and at times she sees with a clearness that all but anticipates the full light of glory, and in that Light she sees all things, and all things in that Light.

She cannot be exalted by praise, nor depressed by blame. Praise that at one stage of her life would have harmed her soul by causing a sense of satisfaction, as if in some way she was worthy of it, and at another by causing her distress and trouble through the sense of her unworthiness, now has no power to touch her. She knows the measureless deep of her own nothingness, assured of herself that she can do nothing, and that whatsoever is wrought in and by her is the work of her Heavenly Bridegroom, Who works in her both to will and to do: whenever she is praised she rejoices not that she is praised, but that her Lover is praised in her. Praise only makes her descend more deeply into the abyss of her own nothingness; she sees her vocation, she has been chosen by the Bridegroom, one of the weak things of this world, that in her He may confound the strong; that base and contemptible, the very thing that is not, she may bring to nought the things that are, for has He not said to her: "I am He that is, thou, she that is not"? But she is His Bride: she has passed into Him. No movement, no act of hers that is not His. How shall she be moved by praise?

Neither can she be moved by blame. For of herself she is nothing, and cannot become less than she is, in this knowledge of her nothingness. No blame, no contempt, no disfavour she can suffer can distress or trouble her secure rest; she is neither wrathful, indignant, resentful, nor complaining, but exults with joy that she is one with her Bridegroom, in the weakness of His suffering life, as well as the might of His Divine life.

She is joyous and glad in the sweetness of this utter "abandon" of all that has and is and shall be. She has no will, no desire, no wish but that of her Lover. He is her All, she nothing; she is His all; she is everything because she is nothing; for her Lover has made her littleness to have share in His Greatness.

She is His precious and most dearly-loved treasure. She sees the infinitude of His Greatness and the depth of her own nothingness: in the supreme gladness of utter "abandon" she sees it and is glad; in the measureless deep of her own nothingness she is united to the infinite All-ness of the Eternal Word; and through all the ever-changing happenings of her days on earth, she rests in a surpassingly sweet content, in the sure embrace of her Everlasting Love.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE JOY OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Love manifests itself in time by sacrifice; indeed, the idea of sacrifice is inseparable from that of love, whether we speak of love in the natural or supernatural order.

When the love-fire burns in the hearts of the lovers, is there anything they are not prepared to bear and endure for each other? Sacrifice springs to life, even in those who, before they had experienced love's quickening touch, seemed incapable of any self-sacrificing act. But love inspires with an unimaginable eagerness the heart of the lover with the desire to bring, at the cost of sacrifice, some gift to love. The greater the sacrifice and the greater the cost, the greater the joy with which the lover brings the gift; the lover is ever contriving some new surprise which may gladden the heart of love.

The bride, in the joy of her mystic union, has this eager desire for sacrifice urging and compelling her in a way unknown before: for there is a surprisingly sweet thrill of joy in sacrifice, far different from that she experienced in the days of her purgation before the marriage. Then sacrifice was painful; now it is joyful.

There is in it something of that intoxicating joy of battle that they know who have experienced it: for there is a joy of battle. The blood tingles as the shells crash and splinters fly, and the fiercer and more terrible the conflict the higher rises that strange thrilling joy of battle in the heart.

It is in such manner that the bride is thrilling with the joy of sacrifice, and the more she sacrifices the higher rises that strange joy within her.

Sacrifice to the bride is the joy of life: she only values life because she can sacrifice and suffer for her Love. She knows, once she passes from earth that the conflict is over, and that she can sacrifice and suffer for her Love no more.

The joy of sacrificial love belongs only to this land of exile: in the Heavenly country she will enjoy the full fruition of love, but the sacrifice of love will be for ever past. That she can only give her Love here. So she does not wish to shorten her days in order to escape suffering and sacrifice; rather would she, if possible, lengthen them. True, with burning desire she longs for the perfect consummation of her marriage life in the unclouded blessedness of the face to face vision; yet she is also drawn with irresistible drawing to desire the prolongation of her suffering and sacrifice.

This fruit of her mystic union; this wonderful impulsion is her Lover suffering in her. She stretches out with eager longing to fill up in her own body what is wanting to His passion, and this filling up in her own body thrills her through and through with a strange ecstatic joy that He is so loving as to choose her for this sacrificial life. Love in time has always in it this sacrificial element, indeed seems inseparable from it.

To the soul of the Bride the joy of life is the joy of suffering; indeed, she is so carried out of herself and beyond herself by the immensity of the desire that fills her whole being, that she would embrace all the sufferings of the martyrs, endure all the pains they endured, just as a love-gift to her Love.

The joy that fills her in this suffering is so surpassingly sweet that it seems as if she perceived not the pain: yet it is not so, but the ardour of eager

love, exulting and rejoicing in bringing her gift to her Lover, so possesses her that there is a strange unheeding of the pain she endures.

She would not be without pain; indeed, it would seem to her strange and as if something were wanting if this sacrificial suffering ceased. The joy with which she endures seems to those who know not the love by which she is consumed, to make her as one without capacity to perceive pain and suffering; yet full often by nature the bride is supremely sensitive, not less responsive to pain than others, but incomparably more so, and this very sensitiveness of soul and body not only liken her more perfectly to her Divine Lover, Whose body and soul possessed a sensitiveness to pain such as none other ever had, but also cause her to burn with more ardent love.

The less sensible the soul, the less capable of sacrifice: so sensitiveness is no hindrance to the bride, but rather a help. There are souls so sensitive that even a look pierces them, and though pierced they are at the same time filled with joy at the piercing, because, little though it be, it is another gift for the Heavenly Lover.

Thus the bride is not less but more responsive to pain than others: she is more responsive to pain in her body, for the very close conjunction between herself and the Bridegroom has, as it were, imparted something of the sensitiveness of His Body to hers; and her soul after the marriage has likewise an increased sensitiveness to pain, and suffers to an extent undreamed of before. Looks, words, acts that before she scarce perceived now pierce her through, and her joy is in proportion to her pain.

Thus outwardly the Bride carries so joyful and so tranquil a countenance that those who see her believe she has been strangely shielded from pain and suffering: yet at the moment they look at her she is suffering within in a manner such as surpasses

all description: supreme joy blended with supreme pain.

The Bride is the warrior: she thrills at the call to battle, exults in the pain and suffering of it, for she fights for her Love. She is partaker with Him in the mighty conflict. She sees the battlefield, she sees the raging conflict: is there one offended and she does not burn? How utterly have the interests of her Lover become her own; how sensitive to the least thing that can displease Him; how the heartless coldness of so many of His Own pierces her—all this in ever-growing intensity as she enters more completely into the Life of her Lover. She would sacrifice and suffer for every injury wrought against Him, for every slight, for every neglect of His Love.

Only here can she manifest her love by sacrifice, and so she will sacrifice to the full: no pain is too great, no anguish too overwhelming for her. She exults and rejoices that now He is in her, and she can suffer as she never could before. That purifying suffering which made her ready for the marriage was painful, but this joyful. Joy rises exultant, rejoicing in the suffering, and the soul of the bride is ever crying, like Gemma Galgani, "More Jesus, yet more!"

St. Rose of Lima suffered the most bitter persecution through the envy and vexation of those who could not endure her extraordinary life. One day, asked by a lady why she did not ask St. Catherine of Siena to rid her from these sufferings, as it was reported she obtained from her whatever she asked, made answer: "What would she say were I to do so? Would she not have reason to reprove me for choosing a different path to hers? God preserve me from such cowardice." She esteemed the sufferings of St. Catherine more, far more, highly than her consolations; she preferred the wounds with

which the Son of God honoured her more than all the sweets of His caresses, for she thought it shameful that the Bride of Jesus crucified should be a moment without the Cross. The pains she suffered in her body were such that it seemed incredible she could live : yet in these torments she turned to her Jesus and said : " My Jesus, my Jesus, increase my sufferings, but increase likewise Thy Divine Love in my soul."

Such is the Bride as she shares in the sacrificial life of the Bridegroom. She has entered into the meaning of those words of the Apostle : " Christ in us, the hope of glory." Yes : it is her Jesus suffer-in her, agonizing in her, sacrificing in her that is the one hope and pledge of glory, the assurance that her marriage ratified on earth, by which, united to His Divinity, she is sharer in the weakness of His humanity shall be fully consummated in the Eternal blessedness of Heaven.

Having this hope, she desires more sacrifice and more suffering : not one pain will she miss. She wills to embrace all, for pain is her joy, sacrifice her delight.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HEART OF THE BRIDE

As the Bride's will has only one single operation with the Bridegroom's, as she has come to be one in will and one in vision with Him, so likewise does she come through her mystic transformation to have a heart like His. "God," says St. Angela of Foligno, "gave me the assurance that my heart should always be in the Heart of God, and in His Will, and the Will of God and His Heart in my heart." To St. Catherine of Siena the Divine Lover, said : "Dear daughter, as I did the other day take away thy heart, so do I now, instead of it, give thee My Heart, with which thou shalt love everlastingly." And so to many others of His lovers has He in mystic manner signified this participation in the burning love of His Own Heart.

And, indeed, how should it be otherwise? How possible that as the Bride and Bridegroom by the mystic union have in a manner become each other, that their hearts should not also share in the union? Thus the heart of the Bride burns with the apostolic zeal and ardent desire for the salvation of all the world, with which the Heart of her Lover also burns. That love is ever going forth, reaching out over the earth in eager longing to draw all souls into participation in the life of love. See how the heart of little Teresa of Lisieux burnt with the fiery fervour of apostolic zeal : how she reached forth over the world in the ardent desire to satisfy her thirst for souls.

There exists in the heart of the Bride this unquenchable thirst for souls. "All souls are Mine." Those words of the Divine Lover are also the Bride's. Lifted up into the participation in the Divine Life, her heart burns with the same fire as His : she would draw all souls to God. She would give her life, and give it again and again, if that were possible, to save the souls for whom her Jesus endured the torment of the Cross. She would satisfy His Divine thirst by drawing every heart to Him. The plenitude of love fills her : she is the Bride, and, being what she is, she cannot but burn and burn with apostolic zeal that all the world may burn with a love like to hers. It is the outgoing of love, burning with its eager desire that all may come to know the love of this Jesus and participate in His Life. The zeal of Sister Teresa of Lisieux was not satisfied by what she could do on earth : no, even from Heaven would she spend herself for souls. "I will spend my Heaven in doing good on the earth. Only when the end comes, and the number of God's elect complete, shall my work be done"; and in amazing fashion is her apostolate being verified from day to day. Miracle upon miracle, conversion upon conversion, bear testimony that she is fulfilling her promise, and that the fiery ardour of her longing was full pleasing to the Heart of her Love.

It is ever thus with the Bride. See it manifested in that wonderful child of South America, St. Rose of Lima. Throughout her life she was consumed with the one desire of satisfying the thirst of her Divine Lover for souls. By tears and prayers, and by her blood, she implored their restoration to the friendship of God. She wept when her eyes beheld the huge mountains of South America, with eager longing for the salvation of the Indians who lived there in the darkness of unbelief. She loved so

much that she desired to be torn in pieces and placed at the gate of hell as a barrier that should hinder souls casting themselves into it.

She exhorted religious persons, when she met them, with words of fire to preach the Gospel to the Indians, and shun all studied rhetoric, which only corrupts the purity of God's Word, and free themselves from the useless subtleties of the schools. She was consumed by even greater ardour for those of the household of the Faith. She took several disciplines a day for the conversion of those whose sins put them in danger of eternal loss. So great was her zeal that, unable to control herself, she exclaimed: "Ah! if it were permitted me to exercise the office of preacher, I would go by day and night barefoot in the most public place, covered with a hair-shirt, bearing a large cross on my shoulder, to exhort sinners to repentance, to tell them of the fearful severity of the Judgment of God," and she advised those who exercised the Apostolic ministry "to make these the subjects of their ordinary discourses, and renounce the ornaments of worldly rhetoric, abstain from studied declamations, as more suited to the theatre than the pulpit, because preachers are sent by God to be fishers of men, to withdraw them from sin and hell by their fervent exhortations." Many wonderful conversions were wrought through her personal influence in life, and many more from Heaven after her death.

The heart of the Bride is supremely pitiful: there is no length, no breadth, no limit to its compassion and pity. She is repelled by no sin, however great, by no failure, however appalling. She suffers and pleads and hopes on. No sinner, however great his sin, but what her heart does not go out in pitiful compassion after him. Nothing astonishes the Bride, nothing surprises her, nothing repels her: she

sees in the greatest sinner the possibility of highest sanctity. She never abandons a soul, however hopeless and however deep sunk in sin: with unwearied patience and incomparable pity, she pleads, suffers, agonizes for that soul's salvation.

She beholds in the most abandoned a soul very precious to her Lover, and strives by every means to draw the soul to God. She is not limited and restrained in the narrow circle of those with whom she comes in personal contact: the whole earth is the field of her labours; by the power of her apostolic prayer, the ardour of her penances, the austerity of her fasts, she toils and labours for the salvation of all.

She prays for all the enemies and persecutors of God's Church. Indeed, the more bitter their hatred, the more confidently she prays, for she sees in each another Saul of Tarsus, a future Apostle who shall blaze with fiery love to Him Whom he has persecuted, and speed through the world to publish everywhere the wonders of the Divine Lover. She sees how sinners sunk in the depths of most loathsome sin have become saints in the past, and she is assured the like is as possible to-day as then. She says: "Yes, they wound and pierce my Jesus, but if they may but see what they do, if they may but see my Divine Lover going after them with His wounds so fresh and red and so wide open, if they see it is they who are opening those wounds so wide, they will surely be overpowered by the seeing, and they will become my Darling's greatest Lovers."

The Lovers of Jesus, whether they love in the solitude of the Cloister, and live there their life of Apostolic zeal, reaching out over the wide world in the force of their inexhaustible charity and unsparing penance; or in the world in the cloister of their heart, having the outward cloister but little, all alike

burn with the same flame—this consuming passion for souls.

And the Bride awaits with loving expectancy that final consummation of the whole Church, when the number of God's elect shall be made up, and the longing desire of God's lovers through the ages be fully satisfied.

CHAPTER XXX

LOVE'S SIMPLICITY

God is the supreme Simplicity and God is Love. That is why one of the most marked characteristics of all true love is its absolute simplicity. Lovers are always simple in all their relations with each other: the affectations of superior people never enter to mar and spoil their intercourse.

Love is amazingly simple, and as bold and daring as it is simple; indeed, its boldness and its daring are rooted in its simplicity.

The soul in her approach to God, from her first falling into love, has been constantly advancing in simplicity, and when, through the mystic marriage, she has been transformed into her Lover by that surpassing union, she has attained to a most marvellous simplicity.

Her relations with her Lover are supremely simple, because she is supremely in love.

The Bride-soul, flooded with love, makes her requests to her Lover with an ingenuous simplicity, and a calm confidence that is astonishing to those that are not lovers. Sister Teresa of Lisieux, ardent little lover, with great simplicity said: "God will refuse me nothing in Heaven, because I have never refused Him anything on earth," words astonishing in their daring and wonderful in their simplicity; and God Himself from Heaven bears testimony that her simple confidence was well pleasing in His sight. For it was a wonderful thing for that child to be able in all simplicity to say she had never

refused the Divine Lover anything. True, our everything is nothing, yet Infinite Love takes up the gift and transforms the little offerings so that they possess an almost infinite value. And He does that because His Infinite Love will never be outdone in generosity. He is the Divine Lover, and when He was on earth He welcomed the little children whom even the Apostles would send away. He takes a child and sets him in the midst to teach the supreme lesson of simplicity, and says: "Except you enter the kingdom of Heaven as a little child you shall not enter therein."

And when He drew to life's evening, looking up to Heaven He says: "I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemeth good to Thee."

Love can refuse nothing to love; hence the soul turns with simple confidence to her Lover and receives His word of assurance: "Ask what you will and I will do it: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

He says to His Bride: Yes, you have left all for Me, you have given Me everything, and now I give you all the wealth of my riches in return—"all that I have is thine." Do earthly lovers ever refuse anything it is in their power to give? Do they not anticipate even the least wish and desire of each other? Shall the Eternal Word be less generous to His Bride than an earthly lover? Of course, it is unthinkable. When the Bride asks in the simplicity of her heart, she must obtain all her asking.

That is why the lovers of Jesus through the ages have been so astonishingly bold and fearless in their asking, because they have reached simplicity in the Heart of Divine Love.

How supremely simple is the approach of the Bride to the Bridegroom: she does not enter with

trembling fear and awful dread. No: she simply looks up into the Divine Eyes and says, "I love You, I love You, I am Your love and Your Bride: You cannot refuse me anything I ask." And He looks down upon her and says: "You shall have all your beseeching, for I Myself am the ground of your asking: whatsoever you ask of Me I will do, for your will is Mine, and Mine is yours: all yours are Mine and all Mine are yours." Yes: He, the Divine Lover in that mystic marriage, has taken everything, but He has given everything, too, in the simplicity of love. Love is repaid by love alone. Love is ever responsive to love. See poor Mary Magdalen, as, loving much, she presses into the house of the eminently respectable religious gentleman, who with scornful condescension and studied discourtesy has invited the Son of God to sit at his table. Love pays heed to none save the object of her love. She sees not the contemptuous glances of the superior people as they gather their skirts closer to them, lest they be contaminated by her touch: she sees only love, and the box of precious ointment is broken to anoint the feet of Incarnate Love. He turns and justifies her act, and says to those who in their supercilious pride condemn her: "Wherever this gospel shall be preached this shall be told for a memorial of her."

It was the simplicity of her act that drew those wonderful words from the Heart of the Eternal Word.

It is the very nature of the simplicity of love that it dares ask what you would never think it would dare to ask. But love, greatly daring, strangely fearless, not only asks, but obtains. Lovers never fear each other and never refuse each other. Love, especially such love as exists between the Bride and Bridegroom, makes, as it were, an equality between them. He was everything, she was nothing, but

now she is wedded to Him He has raised her to an equality with Himself. There is no affectation with the lovers. There is all the difference in the world between affectation and simplicity. You can never fathom the affected soul, either what she really means or what she really wants, because she seems incapable of being real. The simple soul is always straight and direct. Love declares to Love with wonderful straightness what it wants: it makes no lengthy introduction, but with complete simplicity says: "Well, Jesus, You know what I want before I ask. I love You, and, because I love, You will surely give me my asking."

The greater the simplicity of love the greater its power. St. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica, were both ardent lovers of Jesus, both filled with the Spirit of God. They came together for the last time, and when the day drew near its ending they prolonged their discourse, and St. Scholastica said to her brother: "I pray you, spend this night with me that we may talk of the heavenly joys"; but he, answering, said: "By no means, Sister, may I stay without my monastery this night." And St. Scholastica put her head on the table and cried to God, and although the air had been perfectly clear and the sky cloudless before, in the instant between her lowering her head and raising it, there came such a tempest of rain, with thunder and lightning, that neither he nor those with him could go forth to their monastery. He, turning to his sister, said to her: "Sister, what have you done?" And she said, "I asked you and you refused me; I asked God and He heard me. And now go forth to your monastery if you will." With that, together they spent their last night on earth, speaking together of the things of the Spirit. She obtained what she willed because at that moment her love was more powerful than her brother's.

It is always the simplicity of love that wins.

And the Bride has a simplicity in her seeing that far transcends that of the wise, because her seeing is as simple as her love. Hence all the sacred things the Church uses are precious to her, and she sees the power that is in what to the non-lover is merely childish nonsense. The blessed scapular, the blessed medal, and all the many things the Church sanctifies and consecrates by prayer are not only precious, but very dear to her. The worldly-wise say, looking at these things: "Why, the very sight of them makes me shudder." But to love, everything connected with love is precious. The Bride says all these things are very precious: they all belong to my Lover. They all in their varied ways are links with Him. These inanimate things have been touched and sanctified by the touch of God. So with the religious habit: it is precious because it is the bridal dress of God's lovers; it is the outward mark of their consecration to Him. So the bride loves the religious dress: it is something inexpressibly precious to her, for it says the one who wears it has been consecrated to her Love and belongs to Him. You can tell those who are not lovers by their very attitude to these things: they despise them—think them foolish and childish. They think these things make the Church foolish to the wise people outside. Love will always appear folly and lovers fools to non-lovers. You cannot restrain and measure love: from its very nature it is extravagant: it is strangely daring, recklessly bold—it outrages the sense of the wise, the learned, and the prudent of this world. Love is ever so: extreme in its simplicity and audacious in its daring, and its simplicity and audacity always triumph.

Jesus is the Divine Lover. His love cannot refuse anything to His lover on earth when she asks

it of Him. If He, the Bridegroom, has supreme power over her, she has also, as it were, a like power over Him. That is the reason her prayer is so prevailing and so wonderful.

Over and over again God, the Divine Lover, gives to His lovers their asking, and He gives because of their simplicity and confidence in that asking. Has He not said, "Will the earthly father give his son a stone for bread if he ask him? How much more, then, shall I give to My lovers asking Me?"

Love is extraordinarily simple, and as extraordinarily bold, and dares to ask things that are a perpetual astonishment to the wise and calculating. But God has revealed His secrets, not to the wise and prudent, but to the very simple, because the very simple are the nighest to Him, Who is Himself the supreme Simplicity.

The Bride is so simple because she is a lover. Love is always giving, and the Bride is giving to the Bridegroom and the Bridegroom to the Bride in everlasting exchange, with the perfect simplicity of perfect love. She fears not to ask anything, because He has taught her to ask: "He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich hath He sent empty away." The lover in her hungry simplicity of burning love has all her asking: the others, too rich in their own wisdom, were sent empty away, because unable to receive aught of the Divine Lover's riches.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE CHARITY OF THE BRIDE

The Bride sets the love of her Heavenly Bridegroom above and before all else. He alone possesses her heart. There He reigns as King. It is His habitation, although His creatures have their destined place in love, too. But He rules and reigns there as King, and all creatures are loved in Him and for Him.

It is only through the grace of this transforming union by which she was married to God that the soul reaches that perfect ordination of love towards creatures, because up till that moment there was always, if not a disordination, the peril of disordination, because she had not come to the perfect loving in God because she herself was not yet in God.

Not yet partaker of the Divine Life in its fulness, she could not love as He loved, because there was always the possibility that a love begun in the spirit and wholly supernatural might insensibly turn to a love merely natural.

God filling the heart of His Bride with the torrent of His Love, it is impossible for that love not to radiate outwards from her on all around. She does not love only those whose natural qualities in themselves make attractive, those whose very presence and personality bring the sunshine with them wherever they go; but she loves the angular, the awkward, and the difficult, those who by nature seem ungracious, whose very presence seems to chill and overshadow with gloom. Yes: she loves

with a universal love that flows into her heart from the Heart of God. This new life she lives in the power of the Risen Jesus to Whom she is wedded, and she lives and loves like Him. She looks back at herself over the stretch of years that are past: she sees her Love pursuing with His Love, arms outstretched to embrace her, Hands with great red wounds, Head with crown of thorns, Eyes of love that are dimmed by blood; and she sees in what amazing sort His Love has followed her. She sees Him coming after her, coming after her, time after time, again and again; she sees how oft she wounded and grieved and pained Him by her stupid folly and blind rushing away from Him after all sorts of inconceivable follies; sees her many falls, her many despisings of His Love. And yet, and yet He pursued her. How, when disillusioned of her folly, she turned back to Him, He met her without reproach, and His blood-stained arms embraced her and she thrilled at the touch. How, through all, His love never faltered, never varied, never changed. He never turned away from her. He never said: "It is enough, I can do no more for her: she must go her own way." No! His Love was exhaustless, and that Love at last prevailed: the fire burnt in her, she responded, love answered Love, and through all these wonderful days He led her on until now she is wedded to Him. She is His by the utter giving of her wonderful marriage day, and His love surges through her and she is transformed—another creature—a new creation. The love of all around her is transformed, too. She has to love the souls around her like that! Just as He has loved her. So her love must be exhaustless, too, and poured out indifferently on the gracious and ungracious, the lovable and the naturally unlovable, the very angular and the very difficult; all are the objects of her tireless love. He

is loving them in her; it is with His Love that she loves: that explains the extraordinary contrast between the way she loved of old and the way she loves now. She is the manifestation of her Jesus to those around her; she is indeed Jesus to them, for they come to know Him through His manifestation in her.

Even in that ancient Church of the Hebrews God commanded a very high standard of love to the neighbour: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; and that was very much. No wonder to poor human nature it appeared excessive, and there was much discussion to determine who the neighbour was and exactly how much love must be given him, especially when he happened to be a very unneighbourly person indeed. Reflect how strong self-love is, and then see how strong this commandment was. And when the Divine Lover came, and they asked Him which was the great Commandment of the law, He said—and He was still speaking to that ancient Church of the Hebrews—"These two, Love the Lord thy God with all thy strength and all thy might and thy neighbour as thyself. This do and you shall live."

But when He would speak to His lovers, and would Himself manifest love in its highest reach and show on the Cross how God loved, He said to them: "This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you." That was only possible to the soul united to Himself, living by Him, as He lived by the Father. Human love, even the highest, has limitations. Divine Love knows no limitations. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." The Bride is to love her neighbour as He has loved her; and she loves like Him because she no longer loves in a natural way, but in a way wholly supernatural. She loves the most impossible people,

bears uncomplainingly with their manifold complainings. She loves those who injure her, and the more they injure her the more she loves them. She gives them a very loving place in her prayers, because by their acts of bitterness and uncharitableness towards her they have helped to fashion her more perfectly to the likeness of her Love. So she feels a special gratitude and love towards them. She never for an instant bears even a passing thought of ill-will, but loves them in Him and for Him Whose wedded Bride she is. She remembers her Lover's forgiveness: the nails driven in His Body, shivering it with unspeakable anguish, and yet in that dreadful torment He spoke the word of pardon, not waiting for them to repent and beg forgiveness, but forgiving them with loving tenderness as they were in the act of doing Him to death.

So the Bride rejoices at her oneing with the Bridegroom, and loves those who inflicts the wounds upon her and forgives them, pleads for them, and begs her Jesus to bless them and love them in all their ways and works.

Virtue goes forth of her to heal and help those around her as it went forth from Him. As the crowd thronged around Jesus they touched Him and virtue went out of Him to heal and bless: the poor woman who in the press touched with loving faith but the hem of His garment draws the healing power from Him, and Jesus is conscious of the outgoing of the virtue. In like manner strength and power go forth from the Bride, for she, by virtue of her mystic oneing with Him, has His power in her, and that going forth has power to heal the sick of soul and body in the measure that He wills.

The Bride is always giving forth strength to those around her. She is always forgiving and always loving. She is seemingly as exhaustless as the Bridegroom in her pitiful love towards all. The

Bride suffers repulses: she goes to help and her help is refused, but she is not abashed. She does not say: "It will be long before I offer to help you again." No: she rejoices and is glad, for Jesus wanted her to suffer that rebuff, and she prays especially for the human instrument that inflicted it.

Often, too, the soul of the Bride suffers from those who wound her even without intending it; true, there are those others who wound her with very calm and deliberate intention and purpose: they intend to hurt and wound, and she knows they intend to hurt and wound, and yet she loves them and only prays her Divine Lover to forgive and bless. Yes, the lover of Jesus has a right to be despised and thought of no account. She has the right to be nailed to the cross and crucified. She can claim that right. And she has the right to love and generously to forgive all those who inflict the wounds and cause the anguish. She claims these rights, and her Jesus will fulfil her claim. Being one with the Bridegroom, she has the right to love and forgive those who wound and torment her the most, because she must love like Him. When she loves and pours out her love on souls, if her love is unrequited, despised, and scorned: she remembers how often, long ago, her Lover came and suffered so at her hands: she wounded and pierced Him, and He loved her, and loved her till He won her. Now she is His Bride, and she is suffering with Him, and she is glad and would not suffer less, nor would she love less those who wound her.

She is reviled, cursed, hated; being reviled she reviles not; cursed, she blesses; hated, she loves; her Divine Lover lives in her, and hence she leads this super-human life, for the life of Bride and Bridegroom is one life, one love, one act. Like the sun, her love shines down on just and unjust, on those who love and those who hate her.

All they have done to the Bridegroom they will also do to her, for her Lover has told her so : If they hate Me, they will hate you; if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also. And so she loves with the universal love of God every soul that He has made.

Love never fails, is never quenched, is never confounded. Love must triumph, because there is naught in the whole wide world that can resist the Love of Jesus as it manifests itself through His Bride.

CHAPTER XXXII

LOVE'S PERFECT TRIUMPH

The Bride, after her mystic marriage with the Eternal Word, lives a life that savours more of Heaven than of earth. There are moments when the wall of partition that stands between the perfect consummation of her Marriage state in the Heavenly Court seems worn so thin, when the white shining of the Supernal Light is so magnificent that already she seems to partake of the blessedness of Eternity. There are moments when even her body seems to foretaste something of that glorified state which shall be its portion after the Final Judgment.

But the soul of the Bride ardently longs for the breaking of the thread that holds her yet in time. The more she is flooded with the inflowing of her Bridegroom's Love, the more eagerly she reaches forward to that moment when she shall attain her perfect consummation.

Yet such is the perfect unification of her will with His that she expects this day in a spirit of tranquil peace : for her Lover's moment for the perfect consummation of their love is likewise hers.

At times, indeed, it would seem that more of Light and Love was not possible to the Bride than that she possesses here *in via*, when love so wells up within her that she can scarcely breathe. Yet with eager desire she longs for those torrents of pleasure that await her *in patria*.

What is the glory and what the splendour of that

Blessedness which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, which the Divine Lover has prepared for His Bride?

Nothing less than the face to face Vision of God, One and Three, through no medium, for in that seeing she shall see as she is seen : that is the reward exceeding great, that the glory, that the endless splendour which shall be the Bride's everlasting portion when Love shall come to its perfect triumph in Heaven.

And the Bride shall be made ready, adorned with the splendid gifts bestowed upon her by the Bridegroom; three gifts has He given her *in via* : Faith, the light by which she sees the invisible; Hope, by which she reaches forth to Eternal Life; Love, by which even here below she is already one with Him. There *in patria* He adorns her with gifts which are the full consummation of those He has given her *in via*.

Vision, by which she beholds him; *Comprehension*, by which she possesses Him; *Fruition*, in which love finds the fullness of delight.

This face to face beholding of God is not like the merely natural knowledge of God which is in all men, as St. Paul in Romans i., 20, when he says : "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which He has made, His Eternal Power and Divinity"; nor is it the beholding of Faith through the infusion of Grace in which the soul knows God, not through His works, but as He is in Himself, One and Three, yet only in the proportionate similitude of created things; but through the Light of Glory, not after the similitude of any created thing, but by the immediate presence of the Divine Essence in the intellect of the beholder. This great fact of immediate face to face vision is *de fide*. The Council of Florence declares that those souls fully purified straightway enter Heaven and behold

God, One and Trinal, face to face, although for diversity of merit some more perfectly than others; and Benedict XIV says that these souls behold the Divine Essence intuitively and face to face, without any created medium, but immediately, and that their full fruition is in this seeing.

In the natural order can aught short of face to face vision ever satisfy love? The lovers whom seas and lands divide, how eagerly they await the day of reunion! They are consoled by letters, because they reveal more or less the love of heart to heart; they are consoled by the photograph, because it is a picture calling to mind the one loved. But neither picture nor letters can fully satisfy, though the reading of the one and the beholding of the other may quicken the heart with joy not unmixed with grief. At last the day long expected arrives: love awaits love, and those last moments of waiting that seem like an eternity end at length, and the lovers behold each other face to face. There, in joy so ecstatic as to exceed all expression, they are united together in the thrilling exultation of that seeing, blinded by scalding tears of joy, in the happiness of that possession, in which love finds its full content.

That reunion of earth, however joyous, is shadowed by the possibility of loss: for every joy in time has an under-tone of sadness, every possession a fear of separation, every love something lacking.

But when the great day of the Bride's entry into the supernal splendours of her Heavenly Home shall dawn, and she come in the Light of Glory to the face to face beholding of her Divine Bridegroom, nothing will then be wanting to the full perfection of her perfect felicity.

Faith has given place to Sight: she sees her Lover through no medium, however translucent, but

as He is, in His Own Divine Self, and in that beholding is perfect possession and perfect love.

God, One and Primal, God, One and Trinal, as He is, in His Own Divine Self, Him she sees, and she would be blinded by that beholding and see naught were it not for that Light of Glory bestowed upon her, which, strengthening her weakness, enables her to behold the splendid Light of Divinity and live. All the joys, even the greatest, of her marriage days on earth seem to fade in this immediate beholding of her Lover in the unveiled magnificence of His Supernal Glory. In Thy Light we shall see Light: and the bride, in the rapture of that vision, exclaims: "As we have heard so we have *seen* in the city of our God."

In that beholding there is perfect possession: she possesses God; the fullness of her wedded life has come. And this possession is shadowed by no fear of loss, for her beholding and her possession are eternal. There is no yesterday, there is no to-morrow, no looking back nor forward, only the supreme ravishing joy in the full possession of her Lover in the Everlasting *NOW*.

For all that earthly lovers have longed for in their greatest transports, when, holding each other fast in the tense embrace of burning love, they wished to pass into and become each other, and could not; this the Bride possesses in the supreme blessedness of that comprehension by which she fully and entirely possesses Him Who filleth all in all and is All in All to His Bride. She is in Him, and He in her, one life, one love, one in that indivisible and everlasting union which is comprehended in the *NOW*. And her love, full as it has been in the days of her wedded life *in via* attains to the full Fruition of its undreamed-of perfection now *in patria*. She loves and loves in transport on transport of supernatural rapture and unutterable

sweetness and gladsome delight. She is penetrated, surrounded, encircled, possessed by Love in such superabounding measure as surpasses all that may be conceived or described. The wonders of love she experienced on earth when Heaven was brought so nigh, in comparison with the full fruition of these torrents of love and pleasure which she now enjoys, seem so small as to be like a tiny stream compared with the boundless ocean.

Here her love is without alloy: no pain, nor passing shadow, no fears, nothing comes or can come to molest the sweet peace and secure joy of triumphant love.

On earth love manifested itself in sacrifice, here in fruition, in which everything is present and nothing wanting. Love looks upon Love and is fully satisfied at the sight. The eyes of the Bride have opened so wide in that beholding that they shall never more close: her beholding is eternal, her love eternal, her possession eternal. She shall neither hunger nor thirst any more, for no wish, no desire remains unfulfilled. As she sweetly rests in the over-passing flood of eternal love, all the sufferings, all the pains, all the anguish, all the darkness, all the desolation, and all the torment of earth seem light and easy: since they have purchased for her so great a reward. Her suffering life with the Bridegroom when she was on earth filled her with sweet joy, but here she has the fruition of all her toil and labour. Here she beholds her Lover in the unveiled splendour of Supernal Light, and in that seeing she is filled with joy—joy the sweetest, the most transcendent, the most unutterable. And she rejoices that she shared the Bridegroom's pain as she now shares His Glory.

The Bride's eyes look into the eyes of the Bridegroom with the Eternal Light of Eternal Love. All the love-looks of earth are passing—but

the love-sight of the Bride is eternal and will never pass away.

O gioia ! O ineffabile allegrezza !
O vita intera d'amore e di pace !
O senza brama sicura ricchezza !

St. Gertrude beheld God in a vision, of which she said if faith had not told she would not have believed Heaven could give more.

"In this enchanting vision, Thine eyes, bright as the rays of the sun, appeared opposite to mine, and Thou alone knowest how Thou, my dearest Lord, affected not only my soul, but my body and all my strength. . . . When Thou didst display Thy most glorious Face—the source of all blessedness, embracing me, unworthy—a light of inestimable sweetness passed through Thy Deified eyes into mine, passing through my inmost being, operating in all my members with admirable power and sweetness; for it appeared as if the marrow were taken from my bones; then my flesh and bones appeared annihilated, so much so that it seemed as if my substance no longer had any consciousness save of Thy Divine splendour, which shone in so inexplicable and delightful a manner that it was the source of the most inestimable pleasure and joy to me."

If such was a momentary glimpse of God *in via*, what words can declare the ravishing joy and inexpressible sweetness of the Eternal looking of the Bride upon the Bridegroom?

And in the splendour of that Eternal look the Bride sees all things in Him: sees His glorified humanity, His Body shining with the glory of supreme light, His wounds flaming in dazzling effulgence, and, as she looks, new torrents of love flow over her as she recalls that it is through these wounds, which shine in royal splendour now, that

she is His Bride, and she sings her song of loving adoration to Him.

And she looks again and beholds Mary, the Queen-Mother, resplendent in her Royal magnificence, who alone of all human-kind is there in her glorified body, radiant in all the majesty and splendour with which the King has adorned it. She alone loved as no other creature has or ever shall. From the first instant of her creation she was wedded to Divinity—for she never knew the stain of sin; every beating of her heart all the days of her pilgrimage on earth increased her sanctity, and gave new glory to God. And her body is splendid in the magnificence of those adornments which in their degree shall be the portion of all the glorified bodies of God's Elect; but the splendour of her glory is such that it is and ever shall be without compare : for as she is the first and most splendid in all His creation, so she is nighest to Him and one with Him in a glory that transcends that of all the rest.

And the eyes of the Bride look again, and she sees before the Throne of God and the Lamb the mighty host whom no man can number, and she hears their voice of rapturous adoration as the voice of many waters, hymning their Eternal praise to Eternal Love. Love has come to its perfect triumph. In that ageless Eternity, in the supernal splendour of Eternal Light, with eyes of eternal love she gazes upon the Eternal Bridegroom.

Love is triumphant. Love is satisfied.

INEBRIABUNTUR AB UBERTATE DOMUS TUAE, ET TORRENTE VOLUPTATIS TUAE POTABIS EOS. QUONIAM APUD TE EST FONS VITAE, ET IN LUMINE TUO VIDEBIMUS LUMEN.

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